

U.S. Senate,

Committee on Finance,
Washington, DC, November 19, 2008.

Raynard S. Kington, M.D., Ph.D.,
Acting Director, National Institutes of Health,
Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD.

Dear Acting Director Kington: As a senior member of the United States Senate and the Ranking Member of the Committee On Finance (Committee), I have a duty under the Constitution to conduct oversight into the actions of executive branch agencies, including the activities of the National Institutes of Health (NIH/Agency). In this capacity, I must ensure that NIH properly fulfills its mission to advance the public's welfare and makes responsible use of the public funding provided for medical studies. This research often forms the basis for action taken by the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

Once again I would like to bring to NIH's attention my concerns about the lack of oversight regarding conflicts of interest relating to the almost \$24 billion in annual grants that are distributed by the NIH. I understand that you are now attempting to change the regulations covering the extramural research program to ensure more accountability in financial disclosure. I appreciate your work in this area.

As you know, institutions receiving an NIH research grant are required to manage the grantee's conflicts of interest. I would like now to let you know that I have discovered another problem with an NIH grantee and a lack of financial transparency.

In particular, I am concerned about a radio show that discusses psychology and neuroscience called "The Infinite Mind." This show, as I understand it, is independently produced and is distributed to over 300 public radio stations and appears on National Public Radio's (NPR) satellite channel. According to this show's website and promotional comments made during several of the show's episodes, "The Infinite Mind" claims to receive major underwriting from the National Institutes of Health and the National Institute of Mental Health.

The host of the "The Infinite Mind" is research professor Dr. Frederick Goodwin. However, I have learned that while hosting this radio program, Dr. Goodwin also received substantial compensation from drug companies. In the fine print of an article he published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 2003, Dr. Goodwin acknowledged that he "has served on the speaker's bureaus of Glaxo, Solvay, Janssen, Pfizer, Lilly, AstraZeneca, and Bristol-Myers Squibb; and has served as a consultant for Glaxo, Solvay, Pfizer, Lilly, Bristol-Myers Squibb, and Novartis."

For example, over the last seven years, Dr. Goodwin received over \$1.3 million in speaking fees and honoraria from GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) for giving over 480 talks. I discovered this fact through documents that I received from GSK.

I have attached a chart detailing the information that GSK supplied to my staff. Many of the payments to Dr. Goodwin were made through a company called Best Practice LLC (BP).

Based upon independent research conducted by my staff, it appears that Dr. Goodwin founded BP along with several other scientists in the late nineties. It is my understanding that BP advises pharmaceutical companies.

As mentioned earlier, when one listens to ``The Infinite Mind" there is an acknowledgment that NIH money helps to underwrite its production. Accordingly I would appreciate any information that you could provide me regarding financial disclosure requirements applicable to this situation. It seems to me that if the federal government provides financial support for a radio program that is heard by hundreds of thousands of American citizens, then the financial transparency of that show's host is important.

In light of this, I would appreciate gaining a greater understanding of the NIH grants received by ``The Infinite Mind" and the applicable NIH policies on financial disclosure. Accordingly, please respond to the following questions and requests for information. For each response, please repeat the enumerated request and follow with the appropriate answer. The time span of this request covers January 2000 to the present.

(1) Please provide a list of all NIH grants that have supported ``The Infinite Mind." For each grant/contract, please provide the following:

- a. Name of grant/contract;
- b. Topic of grant/contract;
- c. Amount of funding for each grant/contract identified;
- d. Amount of funding provided in grant/contract for the host of the show; and
- e. Supporting documents on financial disclosure, pertinent to the grant/contract.

(2) Please provide a list of all NIH grants, if any, made to Dr. Frederick Goodwin. For each grant, please provide the following:

- a. Name of grant;
- b. Topic/purpose of the grant; and
- c. Amount of funding for each grant identified.

(3) For each of the above identified grants, please answer the following questions regarding financial disclosure:

- a. Please explain the applicable NIH rules on financial disclosure required for the grant; and
- b. Please confirm if the applicable rules on financial disclosure were followed by the grantee.

(4) Please provide a list of any other interactions that Dr. Frederick Goodwin has had with the NIH including membership on advisory boards, peer reviewer on grants, or other similar activities.

(5) Please provide a list of all NIH grants/contract, if any, made to Best Practice LLC. For each grant, please provide the following:

- a. Name of grant/contract;
- b. Topic of grant/contract; and
- c. Amount of funding for each grant/contract identified.

(6) Please provide a list of all NIH grants that have supported National Public Radio. For each grant, please provide the following:

- a. Name of grant;
- b. Topic of grant; and
- c. Amount of funding for each grant identified.

(7) For each of the above identified grants/contracts, please answer the following questions regarding financial disclosure:

- a. Please explain the applicable NIH rules on financial disclosure required for each grant/contract; and
- b. Please confirm that applicable rules on financial disclosure were followed by the grantee.

I request your prompt attention to this matter and your continued cooperation. I would appreciate receiving responses no later than December 3, 2008. If you have any questions, please contact my Committee staff, Paul Thacker. Any formal correspondence should be sent electronically in PDF searchable format to Brian_Downey@finance-rep.senate.gov.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley,
Ranking Member