

# *CORRUPTED SCIENCE*

## Conflict of Interest in Government Science



## Government scientists consult with companies

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- Richard Eastman is a leading researcher at the National Institute of Health (NIH) and director of the division of diabetes, endocrinology, and metabolic diseases at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDKD).
- NIH launched a nationwide diabetes drug study that included Rezulin, manufactured by Warner-Lambert.
- While an employee of NIH, Eastman was a paid Warner-Lambert (W-L) consultant: he received \$78,000 from W-L and \$260,000 from other outside sources including 6 drug companies.\*

\* David Willman, Waxman Queries NIH on Research Ties. *Los Angeles Times*, December 9, 1998, p. A 26.



# CORRUPTED SCIENCE

## Federal lab leader made \$1.4 million on the side

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*LA Times* Dec. 7, 2003

- Ronald Germain's full time job is deputy director of (NIH) Laboratory of Immunology.
- He collected more than \$1.4 million in fees over 11 years and stock options valued at \$865,000; his government salary is \$179,000.
- His consulting income matched his salary in one year and surpassed it in another.
- Many firms for which Germain consulted sought to develop products in the same frontiers he or others at NIH explore.

\* David Wilman. Case Study: Ronald N. Germain, A Federal Lab Leader Who Made \$1.4 million on the Side. *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 7, 2003, p. A34.



# CORRUPTED SCIENCE

## NIH eased COI rules in 1995

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- Under its director Harold Varmus, NIH eliminated or eased several rules intended to prevent conflicts of interest among agency scientists.
- “Intramural employees...are no longer precluded from engaging in activities with outside organizations that had or currently have research agreements or contracts with the employees’ laboratory or branch.”
- “There is no longer a dollar limit on the amount of income that can be received from activities performed for one or more outside organizations.” \*

\* Memo. H. E. Varmus, Nov. 3, 1995.

Eliot Marshall. Zerhouni Pledges Review of NIH Consulting in Wake of Allegations. *Science* 302:2046 (December 19, 2003).

## Drug Company Payments to NIH Scientists

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“In one instance recently uncovered by congressional investigators, a researcher at the National Institute of Mental Health, one of NIH’s 27 components, was paid \$517,000 by the drug company Pfizer over five years; the money wasn’t cleared with agency officials or reported on his financial disclosure form.” \*

\* Editorial. Double Dipping at NIH. *Washington Post*. July 5, 2004, A16.



# CORRUPTED SCIENCE

## Preventing COI in Public Life

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“ Because we cannot prevent officials from mentally taking notice of their own interests, we prohibit the act of holding certain kinds of interests in the first place.” \*

- A. Stark, *Conflict of Interest in American Public Life*\*

\* Andrew Stark. *Conflict of Interest in American Public Life*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000, p.123.



# CORRUPTED SCIENCE

## Bush Administration's Abuse of Science

“The Bush Administration has interfered with science on numerous issues—abstinence education and breast cancer to workplace safety and the Yellowstone National Park. Most of these issues have one of two features: (1) they are issues like abortion, abstinence, and stem cells that have active right-wing constituencies that support the President; or (2) they are issues like global warming or workplace safety with significant economic consequences for large corporate supporters of the President.” \*

\* Special Investigations Division. Committee on Government Reform—Minority Staff. Politics and Science in the Bush Administration (prepared for Henry A. Waxman) November 13, 2003. [www.reformhouse.gov/min](http://www.reformhouse.gov/min) p. 2.

## Drug Data of Government Scientist Suppressed

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David Graham, associate director of FDA's Office of Drug Safety reported to his superiors at the agency that Vioxx increased heart attack risk. He estimated that the drug had contributed to 28,000 heart attacks since 1999. His scientific reports were ignored or squelched and his testimony was barred by his agency head, including an article he submitted to the journal *The Lancet*.\*

\* Michael Scherer. The side effects of truth. *Mother Jones*, May 2005.



## Climate Change Science

The chief of staff at the White House's Council on Environmental Quality, Philip Cooney, ordered numerous changes in EPA's 2003 annual report titled *Our Changing Planet*, adding uncertainty to many solidly-based scientific conclusions. The White House sought to replace the established statement: "climate change has global consequences for human health and the environment" with an innocuous diversionary statement about the "complexity of the earth's system and the interconnections among its components." \*

\* Andrew Revkin. Bush aid edited climate reports. *New York Times*, June 8, 2005, p. A1.

## Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR)

The secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton, was reported to have suppressed science produced by biologists within her own agency about caribou in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

“Norton also added data that were erroneous, stating the caribou calving has been concentrated outside the proposed drilling area in 11 of the last 18 years, when the opposite is true.” \*

\* Michael Grunwald. Interior's Norton Rebuffs Wildlife Service in Senate Testimony. *Washington Post*, October 19, 2001, p. A3.

## Breast Cancer and Abortion

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In November 2002, the Bush Administration posted a refuted putative association between abortion and breast cancer on the National Cancer Institute (NCI) website. \*

They deleted the previous statement made by NCI that “studies showed no association between abortion and breast cancer” and inserted the phrasing that the evidence for a link between induced abortions and breast cancer was inconclusive.” \*\*

\* M. Melbye et al. Induced abortion and the risk of breast cancer. *New England Journal of Medicine* 336:81-85 (January 9, 1997).

\*\* Lawrence K. Altman. Panel finds no connection between cancer and abortion. *New York Times*, March 7, 2003, p. A22.

## Morning After Pill

Acting Director of FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research in the George W. Bush Administration, Steven Galson, rejected the advice of his own scientific staff and two FDA advisory panels and denied women access to the over-the-counter 'morning after' contraceptive pill known as plan B (levonorgestrel).\*

\* Gardiner Harris. F.D.A.'s role in delaying contraceptive is criticized. *New York Times*, March 18, 2005, p. A.16.

## Former FDA Chief Held Stock in Regulated Firms

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The *Wall Street Journal* noted:

“As late as 2004, former Food and Drug Administration head Lester Crawford or his wife owned stock in companies that make or distribute products regulated by the agency....including Kimberly-Clark Corp and Teleflex Inc., which makes medical devices, food distributor Sysco Corp. and Embrex Inc., an agricultural biotechnology company on whose board Dr, Crawford once sat.”

“It is unclear whether the ethics officials [of FDA] viewed any of Dr. Crawford’s holdings as a conflict of interest.”\*

\* Sarah Lueck and Anna Wilde Mathews. Former FDA head held shares in regulated firms as late as '04. *Wall Street Journal* October 26, 2005, p. A2.