

CLOSEOUT FOR M96100034

On October 1996, a program manager¹ informed OIG about possible research improprieties by the subject² that had come to the manager's attention in the course of arranging for the review of the subject's NSF proposal (the first proposal).³ The program manager subsequently provided OIG with a letter received from an *ad hoc* reviewer⁴ and copies of two other NSF proposals⁵ (the second and third proposals) recently submitted by the subject. The third proposal was a revision of the second.

The reviewer described concerns that had been expressed previously by scientists about the data in a manuscript⁶ and papers⁷ the subject had submitted for publication to four different journals. The reviewer stated that the manuscript and the papers contained data that had been inappropriately distorted and misrepresented by the subject. OIG learned that the reviewer had reviewed an earlier proposal the subject had submitted to the Public Health Service (PHS)⁸ and that the reviewer had provided this same information about the subject's manuscript and papers to that agency. The reviewer alleged that both the NSF and the PHS proposals relied on information from these papers. On the basis of a request from the Office of Research Integrity (ORI), the institution had initiated an inquiry into these matters.

OIG learned that the institution's inquiry concluded that most of the data irregularities had been corrected by the time the manuscript was published or the papers had been retracted. However, it was unable to rule out "intentional fraud" and was "particularly disturb[ed]" by the subject's "failure to correct the apparent cause(s) of such repetitive reporting errors." It concluded that an investigation was necessary. Upon learning of this conclusion, the subject resigned from the institution and it decided not to process the case further. ORI closed its

¹ The program manager is Dr. [REDACTED] of the [REDACTED] Program in the Division [REDACTED] within the Directorate [REDACTED].

² The subject is Dr. [REDACTED] a Researcher Associate at the [REDACTED] at the University [REDACTED] (the institution).

³ The subject's declined NSF proposal [REDACTED] (the first proposal) is entitled, "[REDACTED]"

⁴ The *ad hoc* reviewer is Dr. [REDACTED] of the Department [REDACTED] at the [REDACTED]

⁵ The subject's second proposal [REDACTED] is entitled, "[REDACTED]" It was withdrawn by the subject because he submitted a revision, the third proposal [REDACTED]. The third proposal had the same title as the second. The third proposal was withdrawn by the institution after the subject's resignation.

⁶ The manuscript in question was an early version of the third paper cited in the footnote below. The manuscript had been sent to another journal [REDACTED] for review.

⁷ The papers were: [REDACTED] (retracted), [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED], and [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]

⁸ The proposal [REDACTED] was submitted to the Public Health Service by the subject.

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case because it lacked jurisdiction over the questioned research and there was no substantial allegation of misconduct related to the PHS proposal.

OIG reviewed the three proposals the subject had submitted to NSF. The first had been declined and the other two had been withdrawn. Only two of the papers reviewed by the institution's inquiry committee were cited in these proposals. The citations in the NSF proposals to those papers were for general research, background, or procedural information, rather than for specific data. The reviewer of the first proposal remarked on the absence of preliminary data in it demonstrating the feasibility of the proposed research project. OIG concluded that the matters described by the reviewer were serious but that the subject had never received funds from NSF and consequently, NSF had not funded the work described in the papers reviewed by the institution's inquiry committee. Further, there was an insufficient link between the papers and the discussions in the subject's three proposals for OIG to pursue this matter further.

OIG closed this inquiry and will take no further action.

cc: Staff Scientist, AIG-Oversight, IG