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HATE MAIL DOCTOR ESCAPES PENALTY FOR LATEST RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

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Concern was raised today, by scientists and physicians at The University of Toronto, at the lenient penalty issued to a doctor whose latest conduct was announced today by the University's Dean of Medicine David Naylor. Dr. Gideon Koren, a pediatrics professor who achieved notoriety three years ago as the author of a campaign of "hate mail" against supporters of whistleblowing physician Dr. Nancy Olivieri, was revealed today to have been the subject of a further investigation into allegations of research misconduct. Koren's research arose out of studies of the drug deferiprone conducted by Dr. Nancy Olivieri and U.S. colleagues, but later used by Koren without the knowledge or consent of Olivieri and her colleagues.

Koren's misconduct was confided by Naylor to a meeting of the University Faculty of Medicine Council this afternoon.

The only announced penalty issued to Dr. Koren was that he withdraw the offending article and offer private apologies to those involved. No further disciplinary action was announced today by the Dean, despite the fact that Koren was previously found guilty of misconduct when he was disciplined for sending hate mail.

The head of a group that promotes integrity in research expressed concern about the message being sent to the scientific communities inside the University, and around the world, by the lenient sentence. He also noted that Dr. Koren's failure to acknowledge in the offending article that the research had been funded by Apotex, which manufactures the drug, was not faulted today, even though Koren's action violates the University's own policy on conflict of interest for academic staff. "I have to ask, once again, whether the public is getting the leadership they need and deserve from those currently running one of Canada's cherished public institutions, the University of Toronto", said Dr. Paul Ranalli, a neurologist at the University of Toronto, and co-chair of Doctors for Research Integrity. He said the world scientific community is watching these dismaying events unfold at the University of Toronto, and noted that the prestigious journal Nature Medicine, in a June 2000 article, had previously ridiculed the brief suspension handed Dr. Koren for the original hate mail episode, which was also characterized by seven months of denial by Dr. Koren until his authorship was revealed by DNA evidence.

The quiet announcement about Koren's actions by Dean Naylor today stands in contrast to the handling of unfounded accusations of "misconduct" by the

Hospital for Sick Children against Dr. Olivieri two years ago this week. Representatives of the Hospital for Sick Children made public allegations of research misconduct against Dr. Olivieri and, for a period of 18 months, posted the unfounded accusations on a university hospital Web site.

The allegations against Dr. Olivieri have now been dismissed by independent inquiries, including one by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada released in December 2001, that found Dr. Olivieri's actions "commendable." However, the Hospital for Sick Children has never repealed, in similar venues, the announcements that disgraced Dr. Olivieri publicly.

Dr. Olivieri first came to national attention in August 1998, when her research, published in the New England Journal of Medicine that month, documented her findings regarding liver toxicity in children with thalassemia taking the experimental drug deferiprone (L1). The public was shocked to learn that Dr. Olivieri had to brave repeated legal threats from the drug's manufacturer Apotex Inc., and a disappointing lack of support from the university, in order to warn the children on deferiprone, and their family members, about the drug. Apotex later launched a \$20 million lawsuit against Dr. Olivieri and has continued to attack her in the international press.

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