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Paris, August 29th, 1984.

Dr. Donald P. FRANCIS
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL
ATLANTA GA 30333
U. S. A.

Our Ref. : S/LM/EM-n° 84-02

Dear Dr. Francis,

Thank you very much for your letter of August 17th.

Dr. Chermann and I do not see any objection to your proposal that CDC, as an official Institution of the U.S.A., and a leader in the research on AIDS, will coordinate the comparison between HTLV-III and LAV. We understood from your phone call that this proposal was a specific request from the Secretary of Health in a meeting where NCI and CDC representatives agreed that this comparison should be urgently completed.

As you are aware, Dr. Gallo had the possibility to do this comparison on its own, since he had our LAV virus at least from September 23, 1983. After the isolation of HTLV-III was announced, we accepted to make a direct comparison with him between HTLV-III and LAV1. As you pointed out in your letter, this comparison is well advanced for points 1, 2 and 3. For point 4, we have now genomic molecular clones of LAV, and we already know that they hybridize under stringent conditions to HTLV-III RNA of the virus released by the H9 line and to DNA of this line, but not to HTLV-I and HTLV-II clones.

We have recently sent to Dr. Gallo a frozen ampoule of a B cell lymphoblastoid line producing LAV, but upon arrival the line was found by Dr. Gallo to be poor virus producer, so that we have to make another mailing of this line. Dr. Gallo said to me that he could also use the original LAV we sent to him.

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However, we still have some difficulty in obtaining from him the uninfected line H9. We urgently need this line to finish the comparison at the protein level to identify the cellular components which may be, as in LAV, present in the viral preparations and to know whether or not the discrepancy on the size of the glycoprotein is due to the cell line used.

Our position is therefore the following :

1/ We wish to complete as soon as possible the direct comparison with Dr. Gallo but this could be done only after we would have received the uninfected H9 line.

2/ Nevertheless, we agree on the proposal that an official comparison be made under CDC control, whatever be the conclusion (or lack of conclusion) of the first comparison. We are prepared to send you immediately :

- LAV1 strain ; the virus can be grown either in your laboratory or in ours, using B or T cells.
- LAV DNA clone.

3/ For publication of the comparison :
This should include one publication with NCI, CDC and Institut Pasteur, dealing with the data obtained by ELISA LAV and HTLV-III on the 300 sera given by CDC to Dr. Gallo and us.
We agree to make with Dr. Gallo a common publication on proteins and DNA, if we agree on the interpretation of the results. If not, two (or more) separate publications could be published at the same time in the same journal by the different groups.

I hope you will agree with these proposals.

We want to ensure you of our willingness that this comparison will be made by all the concerned laboratories. It is important for the sake of public health that this comparison be achieved as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Dr. L. Montagnier, Director

Dr. J.C. Chermann, Laboratory Chief

Viral Oncology Unit
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