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4/20/92

Dear [REDACTED]

Here is the documentation regarding the discovery of interferon in AIDS and some of our early papers. I had the idea to look for it in 1981. I'm inclosing a paper recording the circumstances under which I had this idea. We found interferon and reported this in deStafano, et.al.(enclosed) in 1982. The reason deStefano is the first author is that I decided the authorship should be alphabetic. Gene deStafano was the lab technician and is now a dentist.

I have little doubt that the sustained presence of interferon is contributing to pathogenesis. At the very least, this possibility should be explored. Interferon is capably of producing many of the abnormalities seen in AIDS, such as elevated triglyceride levels, low tryptophan levels, increased beta-2 microglobulin levels amongst many others. Beta2-microglobulin be regarded as a surrogate marker for interferon. The potent effect of interferon in inducing the synthesis and release of beta2 microglobulin is hardly ever mentioned in the AIDS literature, which is inexplicable. The association of interferon with beta2 microglobulin was worked out in the 1970's.

AIDS was only the second disease in which the acid labile form of interferon was found to be elevated. The other was autoimmune diseases including lupus. This prompted a search for autoimmunity in AIDS and we found this in 1982, not that anyone paid much attention.

Community Research Initiative on AIDS

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The interferon system is also abnormal in AIDS; its antiviral action is not fully expressed. I could go on at greater length and perhaps I should write a review.

We discovered interferon in AIDS in 1981. To this day we do not clearly know what induces it nor which cell it's coming from. I've tried to bring attention to the potential role of interferon in AIDS and organized a meeting two years ago to bring interferon scientists together with the clinicians who were eager to administer it.

The program is also enclosed and Elena Klein presented our observation that AZT promptly lowers alpha interferon. Donna Mildvan was in the audience. I'm enclosing a copy of our paper which is actually in press now ( J of Exp Pathology - which no one will see). It was turned by AIDS and recently turned down by the J of AID syndromes, without review. The same journal just published Margaret Fischls paper on the effect of AZT in lowering beta2 microglobulin. There is not a mention of interferon in the discussion! AZT promptly lowers interferon and undoubtedly this is why beta2 microglobulin goes down

If interferon plays a role in this disease - it is tragic, beyond words, that the AIDS research leadership has obstructed interferon related studies all these years.

Why research on interferon in AIDS has been neglected will undoubtedly be a subject for some future historian of science.

There is a lot I could go on with on the topic of interferon and AIDS, but I'll stop. I'm also enclosing some of our early papers. I would also be happy to send you a list of the very voluminous literature on interferon and beta2 microglobulin. If you do a search you should particularly look before 1980.

Sincerely,

J.A. Sonnabend