



Ian Lipkin and Mary Northridge Appointed to NIH Blue Ribbon Panel

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) announced steps in a comprehensive plan to address public safety concerns regarding a national biocontainment research laboratory now under construction at Boston University Medical Center. Research in the laboratory, the construction of which is funded partly by the NIH, will focus on the development of diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines for a variety of infectious diseases.

As a part of its plan, the NIH established a Blue Ribbon Panel that will review current risk assessments and provide independent technical expertise and guidance. The panel includes experts in infectious diseases, public health and epidemiology, risk assessment, environmental justice, risk communications, biodefense, biosafety, and infectious disease modeling. Panel members, including Ian Lipkin, MD, John Snow Professor of Epidemiology, professor of Neurology and Pathology, and director of the Center for Infection & Immunity, and Mary Northridge, PhD, professor of clinical Sociomedical Sciences, will provide ongoing, expert input and may recommend scenarios to study in any necessary additional risk assessment analyses.

“Our number one concern is the safety of the people working in the laboratory and those living in the surrounding communities,” Elias A. Zerhouni, MD, NIH director, said. “All of the analyses conducted to date indicate that the risks posed by this lab are extremely low. We recognize that the community has remaining concerns, however, and we will address those concerns rigorously, objectively, and comprehensively.”

The panel will advise the NIH in determining the scope of any additional environmental risk assessment that the agency will conduct and will provide independent scientific advice regarding the oversight and conduct of the ensuing study and its conclusions. The Blue Ribbon Panel's process of deliberation and consultation will include soliciting the perspectives and input of the National Research Council on the risk assessment studies. Any additional studies would be performed consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which directs agencies to consider the potential environmental impacts of their actions.

Research in the Boston University Medical Center laboratory will focus on developing new strategies for treating and preventing a variety of bacterial and viral diseases. These laboratories are designed, constructed, and operated to be the safest, most secure labs in the world. “NIH is doing everything necessary to minimize the potential risks to the surrounding community,” said

Dr. Zerhouni. “We will not compromise the public's safety in our pursuit of improving the public's health,” Dr. Zerhouni said.

The Blue Ribbon Panel members are as follows:

Chair

Adel Mahmoud, PhD, MD

Professor

Department of Molecular Biology and Woodrow Wilson School
Princeton University

Members

Donald Burke, MD

Dean, Graduate School of Public Health

Director, Center for Vaccine Research

Associate Vice Chancellor for Global Health

UPMC-Jonas Salk Chair in Global Health

University of Pittsburgh

Stephen Eubank, PhD

Professor, Virginia Bioinformatics Institute

Deputy Director of Network Dynamics and Simulation Science Laboratory

Adjunct Professor, Department of Physics Professor

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Vicki Freimuth, PhD

Professor, Department of Speech Communication and

Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication

University of Georgia

George Friedman-Jimenez, MD

Director, Bellevue Hospital Center

New York University Occupational and Environmental Medicine Clinic

New York School of Medicine

Peggy Hamburg, MD, MPH

Senior Scientist

Nuclear Threat Initiative

Karen Holbrook, PhD

Vice President for Research and Innovation

University of South Florida

Dennis Kasper, MD

William Ellery Channing Professor of Medicine

Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics
Harvard Medical School
Director, Channing Laboratory
Department of Medicine
Brigham and Women's Hospital

Johnnye Lewis, PhD, DABT

Director, Community Environmental Health Program
College of Pharmacy, Health Sciences Center
Co-Director, Environmental Health Signature Program
Health Sciences Center
University of New Mexico

W. Ian Lipkin, MD

Principal Investigator and Scientific Director
Northeast Biodefense Center
John Snow Professor of Epidemiology and
Director, Center for Infection and Immunity
Mailman School of Public Health
Professor of Neurology and Pathology
College of Physicians and Surgeons
Columbia University

Tom Murray, PhD

President
The Hastings Center

Mary Northridge, PhD, MPH

Professor, Clinical Sociomedical Sciences
Mailman School of Public Health
Columbia University

Jean Patterson, PhD

Scientist and Chair, Department of Virology and Immunology
Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research

Mark Gregory Robson, PhD, MPH

Director of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station
Professor of Entomology
School of Environmental and Biological Sciences
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Samuel Stanley, MD

Vice Chancellor for Research
Director, Midwest Regional Center of Excellence
Biodefense and Emerging Infectious Diseases

Professor of Medicine and Molecular Microbiology
Washington University in St. Louis

Wayne Thomann, DrPH

Assistant Professor
Director of Environmental Safety
Duke University Medical Center
Duke University

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) — *The Nation's Medical Research Agency* — includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.