



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

04.N.08,
MoD Main Building,
London,
SW1A 2HB

Grace Filby BA(Hons.) Cert. Ed.
Designs For Wellbeing,
1 Howard Road,
Reigate,
Surrey
RH2 7JE

Your reference: Email dated 29th Aug 2006

Our reference: CPAC_CS_FOIA

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MOD SPONSORED GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP ELIAVA BACTERIOPHAGE PROJECT

Thank you for your email on 29th August concerning the Eliava bacteriophage project which is funded through the G8 Global Partnership. Although your request was received by the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), the Eliava project is managed by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and I have therefore been asked to reply. In providing this response, I have also consulted with officials from the Health Protection Agency (HPA) and the Central Science Laboratory of the Department for Food Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Your request has been treated in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

Taking each of your questions in turn:

1. Why is it only a paper-based study when it could so easily be put into practice? Is the end product really going to be a just a report?

Following reports of the use of therapeutic phage in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) reaching the West in the 1990s many new companies in the US and Europe were formed and invested significantly in bacteriophage research. Examples include:

- Exponential Biotherapies, USA, targeting Enterococcus faecium, S. aureus and S. pneumoniae.
- Phage Therapeutics Inc, USA., targeting S. aureus, S. epidermidis & M. tuberculosis.
- Intralytix, Baltimore, USA., targeting Listeria, & Salmonella for environmental control in food processing.
- Phage Tech Inc. Montreal, Canada.
- Biophage Inc, Montreal. Canada, targeting E coli, Salmonella, Staphylococcus & Pseudomonas.
- PhaGen AB, Linkoeping, Sweden.
- Phage Biotec Ltd, Rehovot, Israel.
- Biocontrol, UK.
- Intralytix , UK.

None of the published data from the FSU which has currently reached the West provides good scientific data with good control data as would be expected in scientific papers published in Western biomedical journals. More recent research from Western researchers has resulted in the publication of a large number of patents and scientific publications. To date the work carried out by these new start up companies, universities and research institutes has not resulted in the publication of good in-vivo data in animal



models indicating the efficacy of phage therapy and which would be necessary to stimulate further investment in the area.

The Medical Research Council funded the Centre of Applied Microbiology (now part of HPA) to carry out in-vitro studies on the use of phage to combat *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* in a Biofilm model (focused on the potential treatment of Cystic fibrosis patients infected with *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*). These results like many others were initially encouraging but ultimately did not deliver the promise anticipated.

A search of FSU literature which has not yet reached the West may provide some clues/ideas which may open up new strategies for the use of bacteriophage which have so far been missed by Western researchers.

2. Is your DTI/MOD project liaising with the DoH and DEFRA at all, and if so, to what extent?

The ISTC collaboration involves staff from HPA Porton, who will assist in reviewing the report and who have already had a number of collaborations with the Eliava Institute in Tbilisi. Staff from DEFRA's Central Scientific Laboratory have also contributed technical expertise to the Eliava project.

3. If there really is such a huge budget for the FSU nuclear programme then would you be able to allocate an extra chunk of it to bacteriophages?

The UK regularly reviews its priorities within the overall Global Partnership programme, including the allocation of resources between various work strands. A key aim of the Eliava biological redirection project is to create a sustainable long term programme of research and subsequent exploitation. Although it may be possible to establish such a programme using further resources from the Global Partnership, including at the expense of the FSU nuclear programme, we believe the Eliava project stands a greater chance of long term success if a variety of stakeholders are given the opportunity to identify potential follow up projects. The initial study of FSU literature, which has been funded by the MOD, should help to identify such opportunities. For this reason, the MOD has ensured that potentially interested parties such as DEFRA and the HPA remain fully involved in the Eliava project. Following the current project, we will be able to review potential options for further work and funding, including from the UK's Global Partnership programme.

If this information does not address your requirements or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of this request then you may contact me in the first instance. If we cannot deal with any issues swiftly and satisfactorily on an informal basis, you can apply for an internal review by writing to the Director of Information (Exploitation), Level 6, Zone F, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, LONDON SW1A 2HB.

If you remain unhappy following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate the case until the internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website: www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk. Further details on the MOD's appeals procedures can be found on the Department's FOI website: www.foi.mod.uk.

Yours sincerely,