Minutes from Panel’s meeting with Albert Gjedde 12 April 14:00

Approved.

The meeting took place via a SKYPE connection between Albert Gjedde, who was in USA, and the Panel and Secretariat at University of Copenhagen, The Panum Institute, room 33.3.7, Copenhagen

Participants:
Head of Department, Professor Albert Gjedde (AG), Department of Neuroscience and Pharmacology, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Copenhagen.

Panel:
Professor Hans Lassmann (HL), Austria (Chair of Panel)
Professor Margaret M. Esiri (ME), United Kingdom
Professor Christine Dijkstra (CD), The Netherlands
Professor Hartmut Wekerle (HW), Germany
Professor Anders Blomqvist (AB), Sweden

Secretariat to the Panel:
Professor Lars Terenius (LT), Medical Expert in the Secretariat
Consultant Pia Jørnø (PJ), Leader of the Secretariat (Rapporteur)

Agenda:
1. Short presentation round.
2. Information on the procedures of the Department of Neuroscience and Pharmacology in connection with documentation of research and handling and storing of research material.
3. MP’s authorities/responsibilities in her employment at the Department.
4. Possible other questions.

Abbreviations:
MP = Milena Penkowa
SUND = The Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Copenhagen

Minutes:

Ad 1. Short presentation round

HL thanked AG for attending the SKYPE meeting and asked whether AG would accept a dictaphone turned on. He explained that the dictaphone exclusively was used as support for PJ’s writing of the minutes from the meeting. AG accepted the voice recording of the meeting.
Ad 2. Information on the procedures of the Department of Neuroscience and Pharmacology in connection with documentation of research and handling and storing of research material

AG had supplied the Panel in advance of the meeting with a memorandum explaining the research quality procedures at the Department.

HL conveyed his observation of that there are no formal rules or guidelines for research and documentation procedures at SUND, but that organisational improvements have been implemented, e.g. enhanced quality control and mentoring, since AG has taken over the heading of the Department of Neuroscience and Pharmacology. AG explained that due to the previous accusations against the work of MP, he had wanted to ensure that MP’s work and documentation were beyond debate. Thus AG agreed with MP on implementing control counts by external experts and documentation of that counts were unbiased (the latter took place only one time before the suspension happened in 2010). AG told that he took over the Head of Department position in December 2008.

AG explained that MP had become a prominent researcher in the later years and had collaborated with some reputable researchers including professors Bock and Klarlund Pedersen.

Ad 3. MP’s authorities/responsibilities in her employment at the Department

AG had supplied the Panel in advance of the meeting with a memorandum informing about MP’s authorities/responsibilities in her employment at the Department. At the meeting the Panel forwarded no further questions concerning this issue.

Ad 4. Possible other questions

AG’s reporting to DCSD of a paper on op/op mice

On question from HL, AG explained about the paper concerning op/op mice which AG has reported to the Danish Committees on Scientific Dishonesty (DCSD) in 2010: Associate Professor Hanne Mikkelsen, who had bred the op/op mice at Panum and supplied them to MP, had looked at the paper which refers to 35 op/op mice. However, Hanne Mikkelsen had only supplied 5 op/op mice to MP, and she therefore informed AG in a note that there was a discrepancy between her supply and the number of mice referred to in the paper. Hanne Mikkelsen’s animal journals confirm that only 5 op/op mice has been bred and supplied to MP. This was further confirmed by documentation from the vendor of the op/op mice, saying that the vendor was not at that time able to supply further op/op mice.

HL noted that it is a problem when there are fewer animals recorded in the journals than referred to in the papers. AG added that it cannot be rejected that this can be explained; a researcher can
e.g. have received tissue from other places or in rare cases forgotten to record some animals in the journal.

HL told that the Panel has not been able to find MP’s animal journals for 2001 and 2002 and asked if AG has knowledge about these two journals. AG responded that he has seen copies of “animal journal” pages, which to his recollection are from that period, in which several entries were recorded, but they were not signed by the animal experiment authority.

The process after the suspension of MP and the archive with the items from MP’s office and lab

HL noted that the archive holding the items from MP’s lab and office is disorganised, and that according to MP it is the Department which has messed it up. He thus asked AG to explain what the Department had done with MP’s items after the suspension.

AG told that he found it very important to secure the continuity of MP’s students’ projects after the suspension of MP in March 2010. He therefore allowed the students access to their material in the lab, but demanded a record to be kept on every person entering and leaving. AG also established a committee of four professors who took care of the administration of the office and lab and of the continuous supervision of the students. His policy was as little disruption of MP’s lab and items as possible, because it was possible that MP could come back and resume her work at the Department. MP’s personal office was locked ever since the suspension in March 2010, and the key was not in AG’s possession. When MP resigned in November 2010, the lab also was completely locked up, and only three persons had a key (SUND’s chief of security officer Steen Ruben, the Department’s Engineer Assistant Steen Petersen and AG). AG told that he himself only set foot in the rooms in company with another person. But he also expressed awareness that before the complete lock up, extra keys may have existed and students or other persons may have accessed the office and lab, e.g. for using the microscope in MP’s office. AG noted, though, that he could safely say that nobody with an official position at Panum or the Department have had any hand in the claimed messing up of the items MP’s rooms or the archive.

HL thanked AG and expressed that his information was important for the Panel’s investigation.