



20 August, 1998

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To the Members of the Golden Retriever Club of America:

I have been asked by Joyce Kinghorn to write this letter explaining the status of the study you co-funded, "A Program to Genetically Control Canine Hip Dysplasia" by Gail K. Smith, VMD, PhD and Eldin Leighton, PhD. The study started on 1 December, 1993, and was completed 31 April, 1997.

While several manuscripts have been written regarding results obtained for German shepherds and Labrador retrievers, to my knowledge none have been written regarding golden retrievers. I discussed the issues with Dr. Smith in early August, and he indicated that he intends to submit manuscript(s) regarding the results of this study as they apply to golden retrievers. I have also asked, in writing, for Dr. Smith's estimate of when he will be able to produce the manuscript(s). I sent Dr. Smith my request just last week, and at the time of this writing he has not responded. If I have more information for you prior to your meeting, I will forward it to you.

I feel it's important to comment at this time about the ethical considerations regarding original research. When Morris Animal Foundation contracts to fund health studies, we carry a 50-year tradition of getting the most for our research dollars and upholding the highest standards regarding administration of the grants. As you probably already know, our Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) operates under strict protocols regarding conflicts of interest, and is thus able to select the "best of the best" studies to begin with. The SAB does an outstanding job of monitoring the studies, which includes selected site visits, and we feel we are able to satisfy our donors with these assurances.

For our part, we are also well respected by the research community in honoring a standard of ethics regarding results of original study. There are several reasons why results should not be released prematurely. The most important reason is that until the results undergo strict data analysis, premature release could be detrimental to the animals. Extreme examples include new drugs that have to be recalled by manufacturers after unwanted side effects, including death, are discovered. But even with basic research, premature release of information might lead other investigators down the wrong path, or bring false hope to pet owners. It's just not wise to release information until all the work is done.

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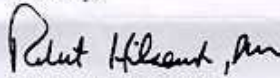
There are other reasons not to release information prematurely. Investigators in university settings make their livings by doing original research. They must protect their ideas from others to be able to publish. It wouldn't be wise to give away their bright ideas so other investigators could benefit from them. In addition, the universities that employ the investigators may rely on potential income from results of the research being performed. The Morris Animal Foundation contract requires the university to split royalty income from potential intellectual property with the Foundation. Once again, in dealing with intellectual property, we must be careful.

Although I am a veterinarian, I am not actively engaged in veterinary research. I do have experience in administering studies, however, in that the Foundation administers approximately 80 studies each year. We rely on our Scientific Advisory Board to determine what studies are worthy of our support and to monitor those studies. Having accepted their recommendations, we then must rely on the principal investigators to follow through and complete studies. It behooves principal investigators to cooperate with funding agencies, in that they often come back to the well for funding of future studies. In addition, funding agencies communicate with each other, and a reputation for failure to complete studies would be detrimental to a principal investigator.

I consider the fact that Dr. Smith has not published his information regarding golden retrievers disturbing, but by no means crucial to the future of the breed. I can not second guess why there has been what I consider to be a delay. As I indicated earlier, Dr. Smith assures me that he has publishable data, and that he intends to submit it for publication.

I apologize for the delay, and understand your concern for getting this information. We all want the very best medicine for our companion animals, and our Foundation is dedicated to facilitate that to the best of our ability. I will continue to work with Dr. Smith in an effort to disseminate the information as soon as practical. Thank you for your support, and thank you for your patience with this matter.

Sincerely,



Robert Hilsenroth, DVM
Executive Director