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Ms. Janice Strother, NIEHS Ethics Coordinator  
NH Room 269, MD NH-01  
PO Box 12333  
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

Dear Ms. Strother:

In June 2005, Environmental Working Group (EWG) asked your agency to investigate a Harvard University professor, Dr. Chester Douglass, who may have misrepresented one of his student's research findings on the link between fluoride and bone cancer in young boys in a government-funded study. We have recently learned that NIEHS has turned the investigation over to Harvard University and that it has apparently neared completion.

To our dismay, we only became aware of this situation via the media, where, in a recent story by WFXT, Boston's local FOX station (viewable online at <http://www.ewg.org/news/video.php?id=5065/>), Dr. Douglass was filmed brandishing what he indicated was a copy of Harvard's report. He declined to let the reporter read the report, claiming that it was still in draft form, but allowed that it would "speak directly to the issue of whether there's any evidence of trying to cover something up."

We are not privy to Harvard's procedural rules for conducting an academic investigation, but it seems unusual for the subject of the investigation to have access to the report before it is finalized. Is this standard practice for NIEHS investigations? Are you aware of the extent to which Dr. Douglass is allowed to comment on, suggest or even make substantive changes to the report? Have you received a copy of this draft report for review, and is NIEHS aware of when it might be made public?

We are concerned, furthermore, that while Dr. Douglass apparently has a copy of the report, EWG, the party that lodged the initial complaint, has never been contacted concerning any of the substantive issues raised in the complaint, nor have we been given any notice or information relating to Harvard's investigation.

Please advise us as to whether this apparent oversight is standard procedure, and if not, as to what course of action we or your agency might take to rectify this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Richard Wiles'.

Richard Wiles  
Senior Vice President  
Environmental Working Group