

articles, except to condemn the wanton disregard for research ethics and human rights. We are, first and foremost, physicians caring for patients, not social architects or subcontractors for repressive regimes.

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Competing interests: None declared.

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[The author responds:]

The investigation about which Mark Dubé raises concerns involved treatment for patients addicted to opiate drugs in which a surgical lesion was made in a brain region (nucleus accumbens) considered to influence addiction to abused drugs.¹ The study reported partial success of the procedure.

Dubé feels that the study should not have been cited because the investiga-

tion was conducted in China and at a military-affiliated hospital (Tangdu Hospital) and, therefore, there would be ethical problems concerning lack of consent. As a point of clarification, my understanding from my Chinese colleagues is that it is likely that most patients at Tangdu Hospital in China are from the public.

I chose to cite the article in my review² because the article stated explicitly that patients underwent surgery “of their own free will”¹ and because I do not feel that the fact that a human study is conducted in China is sufficient grounds to dismiss the findings. I recognize that there will be those who feel that such consent cannot be freely given in China. I note that the same group described their consent process in more detail in a subsequent article: “All patients gave written informed consent according to the Declaration of Helsinki, and the study was approved by the local ethics committee.”³

The data from the study that I cited in my review were presented at the 2003 meeting of the American Society for Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery and published as a full article in the society’s journal as part of the conference proceedings.² The Tangdu Hos-

pital group’s other study discussed above was published in the same journal.³ I mention this only parenthetically; I do not mean to imply that only human studies published in Western journals should be considered for citation.

In my review, I expressed my opinion that the findings from the article in question are preliminary. I did not cite the article as providing a potential strategy for treatment of drug addiction but only as providing limited evidence suggesting possible involvement of one brain region in drug addiction.

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