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## Interview: Dr. Drasko Pekovic

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# The politics in scientific research is fatally infecting the AIDS issue

*Dr. John Grauerholz interviewed Canadian dental researcher Dr. Drasko Pekovic at the June 2-3 First International Symposium on Oral AIDS, in Montreal, Quebec. The conference was organized by Dr. Pekovic.*

**EIR:** Did you run into any problems organizing this symposium, since the topic was somewhat controversial?

**Pekovic:** Many problems. I think that's routine in the organization of any scientific meeting.

**EIR:** I heard that some people who had planned to participate were encouraged not to.

**Pekovic:** Well, there is a very strong polarization of scientists throughout the world. It is a very delicate situation, which is, at the same time, very complex. I would say this is part of an actual crisis in the scientific community. Such polarization is present even within university departments, and there is nothing really special. We have to cope with such problems. You have heard about the fifth [international AIDS] conference. A lot of people are saying we are not going to the sixth conference.

**EIR:** That's interesting. Is that primarily the scientific people, who are saying this?

**Pekovic:** Yes, and they said this on the TV, and in the newspapers. There is a lot of politics now involved in the organization of scientific conferences, and we are losing time, and legitimate researchers are becoming frustrated. It's a very complex situation, nobody is able to control it, and WHO is giving sponsorship for these "scientific" spectacles. I know that a lot of my colleagues, whom I met here in Montreal, told me that they are not going to go to San Francisco, and I'm not going, either. Many scientists suggested that I stage my next symposium with the possibility for presentation of general papers by calling it the Second International Symposium on Oral AIDS and Related Health Problems, just to have an alternative for the sixth conference. I don't think that I will do it, since I'll try to preserve the purity of the subject, and I think that oral AIDS is extremely intriguing and very specific, and I'm not going to involve everybody. I'm more interested in having groups working hard on

that subject, and people who can help us to better understand this very complex phenomenon.

**EIR:** Was there polarization around the issue of an oral AIDS conference?

**Pekovic:** I would say yes and no, because I had the majority of scientists working in the area of oral AIDS at my conference. I had 50 speakers. The fifth conference had only six speakers and a few posters on oral AIDS. So if anyone disagreed with attending the symposium for any reason, they are in the minority of people working on oral AIDS. I would say that I had the majority, if not all, of the people working on oral AIDS, who were able to come. I missed some people from China, because of the political situation there, and from underdeveloped countries who were unable to find financial support to attend the symposium. Next year they will probably have a better chance to attend and participate.

And you are working for which journal, you said? Why is a medical doctor working for such a journal?

**EIR:** For *Executive Intelligence Review*. Because there are matters in medicine which are important to our readership.

**Pekovic:** Oh, I see. Why are you not attacking this crazy political situation in the scientific community? We have people trying to rule everybody in the world. I think that it's not AIDS from which we are suffering. We are suffering from AIDS of AIDS, this politics which is infecting the scientific community, and it's a serious problem. We have practically lost our autonomy and our freedom of expression, because we are ruled by big groups. In fact, I had a letter which came from, let's say, a big group in oral AIDS. I produced a second announcement of my conference, just before the fourth conference in Stockholm, and I went to Stockholm with 5,000 second announcements. And Deborah Greenspan of San Francisco took the liberty of writing the signatures of five doctors, working in her group, to a statement that they were withdrawing from the list of committees and that they would not allow me to distribute the second announcement. I went to Stockholm, and I found one of them, and he said, "That's not my signature; at the time when this letter was sent to you, I was already in Stockholm," and I noticed that all the other

signatures did not appear authentic. So I found the lady in Stockholm and we had a nice discussion, but she is already known to be trying to rule everybody. But I think that we have such people in almost any field, because such people are trying now to control the scientific community.

**EIR:** That's very true, and that's precisely what I'm interested in, because I've seen it in many areas.

**Pekovic:** Yes, you know I was called from three groups in the U.S., and they told me that they would like to attend the symposium, and to communicate their results, but they are unable because the group of Greenspan would not give them permission to come and to release their own results. And I also communicated with two Canadian groups and I received the same answer. This is the way such international organizations are destroying scientific freedom. These big political groups are asking for concentration of all results, and not releasing results without their permission, and that's very bad. The real scientist who is working hard in his laboratory is dependent on these agencies and groups for funding. In AIDS you have a few individuals and groups which control most of the available money, and they use this control to enforce their policies on the scientists who are too busy doing research to play these political games.

**EIR:** That is precisely the issue that our journal is interested in, because it obviously has impact on health and many other things if you have scientific decisions made on a political basis.

**Pekovic:** But, you have to attack everybody. You have to attack the World Health Organization. That's the biggest mafia of the scientific community. That's the origin of all problems, you know. I had sponsorship. Jonathan Mann was with the symposium at the beginning, and Dr. Pindberg, who is in charge of AIDS dental research at the WHO, and both of them changed their minds later on, and they were accepted by the fifth conference. But somehow I think that's the usual thing. Nothing is surprising in this world of very political movements in the scientific community.

We will not have any success in AIDS just because of these politics. I don't know if you are aware of two articles just after the New Year in *Science*. Somebody attacked the theory that HIV is the etiologic agent of AIDS, on one-half page, and Dr. Gallo answered that attack on six pages, and he was unable to defend or to prove that HIV is the AIDS virus. You know also this fight between Gallo's group and Dr. Luc Montagnier's group [at the Pasteur Institute in France]. In fact I heard that Dr. Gallo did not discover the virus at all, that Montagnier sent him pictures of the virus, and Gallo published Montagnier's pictures.

**EIR:** He did, and he also grew Montagnier's virus.

**Pekovic:** Now, somebody called me over the phone, and he told me that, in the *Gazette* here in Montreal, they have even

criticized Montagnier because he has not given any credit to Dr. Barre-Sinoussi, who actually found it. So you have politicians who get all the glory from what somebody else is working on. Now, we are pushing CD-4 and we already know that CD-4 has nothing to do really with infection.

**EIR:** Well, I think it has to do with some of the receptor molecules, but not all of them.

**Pekovic:** Not at all, and in fact we have presented a paper at the fifth conference showing very little reaction with CD-4 and patients' serum. Initially it was suggested that the attaching protein of HIV is a mirror image of the CD-4 receptor, and that antibodies against the attaching protein, are also directed against CD-4. In our studies, and we have developed specific and precise techniques to study this reaction by a double immunoelectronmicroscopy labelling, we are not convinced at all. Of course CD-4 is probably involved at a certain level, but it's not a significant level. I don't think that there is any future in dealing with CD-4 as a blocking element in the infection of target cells, but we will see in the next two years what will happen. But when big scientific companies are not investing money in the subject, that means it's not solid scientific truth.

I think the best place to attack this problem is probably in *Paris-Match*, or *New York Times*, or big journals, but still, your journal is quite good to initiate criticism. Unfortunately, journalists are not able to criticize scientists, and scientific politics, and unfortunately we don't have any single scientific journal which is specifically oriented against scientific politics, especially monetary scientific politics. I think that if anybody organizes such a journal, it will have a great number of readers, and great future, because we scientists are unable to criticize our politicians. If we criticize our granting agencies, we are dead; that's suicide. We will never have a single penny.

If you look at the organizing committee of the fifth conference, and you check in *Index Medicus*, you will realize that just a few of them have published anything on AIDS. Yet they have gained visibility and credibility among the world scientific community as organizers of the fifth conference. That's frustrating for simple scientists, seeing somebody on an organizing committee without adequate credentials, and without publishing anything. It's incredible really, and nobody's attacking this, nobody, and medical journalists are saying that the First International Symposium on Oral AIDS has provided much more valuable scientific information than the fifth conference.

So, I look forward to following the increase of interest of scientists in a second symposium, and I am very encouraged. We know very little about this problem and everybody is trying to block discussion of oral AIDS. I think that the scientific and medical community and then the general public, has to know everything about oral health problems in AIDS patients.