

NIH scientist refuses to answer questions

June 15 2006

A National Institutes of Health researcher has reportedly refused to answer questions about his use of federally owned medical samples.

Trey Sunderland invoked the Fifth Amendment during a Wednesday appearance before a congressional subcommittee about charges he improperly gave information to the pharmaceutical firm Pfizer Inc. as well as thousands of NIH-owned vials of human spinal fluid and plasma, The Washington Post reported.

"I respectfully decline to answer this question, and any other questions, based on my constitutional rights," Sunderland, an Alzheimer's disease senior researcher, told the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations in response to the panel's first question.

Committee investigators earlier this week released a report accusing Sunderland of giving Pfizer more than 3,000 NIH samples of fluids taken from Alzheimer's disease patients and research volunteers in return for \$285,000, as well as receiving an additional \$300,000 for other services, without reporting the arrangements, The Post reported.

Pfizer told The Wall Street Journal the payments were reasonable, customary and permitted under NIH rules that were in effect at that time.

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Citation: NIH scientist refuses to answer questions (2006, June 15) retrieved 24 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2006-06-nih-scientist_1.html

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