

The Nation

Compiled from wire services

BRIEFLY

Deadly skin cancer cases up sharply

■ Atlanta

The deadliest of skin cancers has gotten deadlier.

The number of people diagnosed with melanoma rose about 4 percent a year from 1973 to 1991, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That was faster than any other kind of cancer.

And the rate of melanoma deaths rose by 34 percent, from 1.6 per 100,000 people in 1973 to nearly 2.2 in 1992, the CDC reported. Melanoma causes about three-quarters of all deaths from skin cancer.

Researchers blame the increase on the popularity of outdoor recreation and tanning, despite the recent proliferation of sunscreens and more

University investigating author of alien-sex book

Associated Press

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — A year ago, Harvard psychiatrist John Mack cruised the talk show circuit promoting his best-selling book about people who say they had sex with aliens.

Now, a committee of colleagues is investigating whether Mack's alien abduction research meets the school's standards for scholarship.

The Harvard Medical Committee expects to complete its report within two months. Based on the peer review, the dean, Dr. Daniel Tosteson, will make a decision that could range from trying to oust Mack to applauding his perseverance in doing work his colleagues

might call quackery.

Attorney Roderick MacLeish, representing Mack during the review, said Harvard's action violates the principle of the tenure system, which gives professors jobs for life so they can feel free to pursue radical or unpopular research.

"History has not been kind to those who have unorthodox ideas," MacLeish said Thursday. "That's the whole point of having a free and open academic community. That's the whole purpose of tenure."

Before he started talking about space aliens, Mack was a well-respected professor at Harvard Medical School. He founded the psychia-

try department at Cambridge Hospital, one of Harvard's teaching facilities. He won a 1977 Pulitzer Prize for his biography of Lawrence of Arabia.

Mack drew a different kind of notoriety for the book "Abduction: Human Encounters With Aliens," about his treatment of patients who say little gray space creatures kidnapped them and took them away in flying saucers for sexual experiments.

The book's 13 case studies include Ed, who remembers an alien woman taking a sperm sample from him when he was in high school; Jerry, who says she gave birth to a human-alien hybrid; and Peter, who tells Mack he had an

"alien wife" in a "parallel universe."

After the book was published in April 1994, Mack appeared on "The Oprah Winfrey Show," "Larry King Live" and other talk shows.

It may have been publicity that inspired the medical school to investigate Mack's scholarship, said a source close to the case who spoke on condition of anonymity. The source also said that the professors felt threatened by Mack's otherworldly research.

"If Dr. Mack is right, it undercuts so much of the work of people over there. These people don't think anything is true unless they've got a controlled study with rats," the source said.



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