

Psychiatrist for Alien 'Victims' Cleared by Harvard

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CAMBRIDGE, Massachusetts — After more than a year of hearings, Harvard officials have decided not to discipline a psychiatrist who gained notoriety for taking seriously people who said they had been abducted by space aliens.

Instead, the dean of the Harvard Medical School, Daniel Tosteson, met with Professor John E. Mack and reminded him of the standards expected of a Harvard employee. At the same time, however, the dean reaffirmed the psychiatrist's right to study any subject.

The outcome was a relief to Professor Mack, his lawyer said Thursday, but added that it hardly made up for the stress, lost time and \$100,000 in legal expenses that he incurred in defending his right to investigate UFOs, aliens and reports of insemination of humans by space creatures.

The issues of academic freedom raised by the case

made the dean's investigation hotly debated, on the Harvard campus and beyond. The affair also provided publicity for Professor Mack, who made the talk-show circuit last year to discuss his book "Abduction," which is about alien encounters with humans.

The Harvard Medical School announced Thursday that its review by a three-member panel had been completed. It said Dean Tosteson had met with Professor Mack and urged him "not, in any way, to violate the high standards for the conduct of clinical practice and clinical investigation that have been the hallmarks of this faculty."

But the dean also "reaffirmed Dr. Mack's academic freedom" and noted that he remains a "member in good standing" of the medical school faculty.

Professor Mack's supporters said the review should never have taken place.

"It has been an extraordinary experience for someone who has done nothing wrong," said Eric MacLeish, the lawyer for Professor Mack, who is on vacation.

Until last year, the professor was a respected psychiatrist with a number of impressive accomplishments.

Winner of a Pulitzer Prize in 1977 for his biography of T. E. Lawrence (popularly known as Lawrence of Arabia), Professor Mack was also the founder of the psychiatry department at Cambridge Hospital. In the early 1990s, he became interested in alien abduction.

Soon, dozens of people who claimed to be involved in such incidents were flocking to him for treatment. Professor Mack writes that he gradually became convinced that they were not mentally ill and had symptoms similar to those of actual trauma victims. Eventually, he published his findings in a book that became a best-seller.

Defending the review, the chairman of the investigating committee, Professor Emeritus Arnold Relman, said the question was not academic freedom but the soundness of Professor Mack's research. Professor Relman said the dean had received "many, many complaints" about the psychiatrist.

The medical school never indicated what penalties Professor Mack might have faced.