

Professor criticizes 'Nova' UFO show

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BOSTON — Harvard Medical School psychiatrist John Mack likens today's debate over abductions by aliens from outer space to discussions 500 years ago over whether the Earth is round.

And, he comes down hard on tonight's "Nova" show on WGBH-TV as unconscionable and biased and says it comes across as an attempt to pooh-pooh the idea of Earthlings being snatched by extraterrestrial beings.

Mack has investigated claims of alien abductions for years.

"The effect of this ("Nova") program is to try to discourage anybody from taking the reality of this phenomenon seriously," he told the Boston Herald Monday.

"They try to dismiss it as hallucinations or distorted thinking or people being led by hypnotists, and in my view, having worked in this field, that is patently false.

"Alien abduction is not something that yields its secrets to conventional explanations," he said.

Acclaimed astronomer and biologist Carl Sagan says reports of alien abductions, some of them including rape, are hallucinatory, or can be explained scientifically.

"We are facing a problem like that faced by the people of the 15th century," Mack wrote to WGBH-TV.

"In that day, many people could not believe the world was round because common knowledge dictated that people would fall off any round object."

The hour-long "Nova" program was defended by its producer, Denise Dilanni, as a "thoughtful and considerate treatment of a complicated subject."