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Professor Cecil Karabus  
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Dear Professor Karabus

It's a jolly good thing you 'hesitate to call Anthony Brink a liar' in your letter to the *Mail&Guardian* on 18 November 2005 (copy enclosed), because if you did you'd find yourself at the sharp end of a summons, I promise you. For my part, I have no hesitation in outing you as a stupid ignoramus – and for reasons you're about to discover, were the parties to such a defamation action to be listed in reverse order, any judge would heartily agree. Once he's seen the research data I'm referring to, unpacked in court over a few

The **Treatment Information Group** is a public interest initiative to promote *research-based* debate of antiretroviral drug policy, alternative non-toxic treatment approaches to AIDS, and HIV testing issues in South Africa. The TIG has entered into a strategic alliance with the **Dr. Rath Health Foundation Africa** to achieve this.

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*Propaganda is to democracies what violence is to dictatorships.*  
Noam Chomsky

days. That you've never heard of. And which you otherwise dismiss as 'garbage'.

You say that 'in my reading of the mainstream literature I have failed to come across the "hundreds of studies indicating the profound toxicity to all human cells of AZT" and the numerous studies showing that babies exposed to AZT in the womb suffer brain damage et cetera.'

How very dismally you illustrate yet again the problem mentioned by President Mbeki in the *Sunday Times* way back on 6 February 2000: 'What do you do if ... university people, professors and scientists ... haven't read ... won't read? What do you do?'

Indeed, what does one do about medical academics and clinicians too bone idle to keep abreast of their professional literature, and on top of that proudly crooning in the media about their sloth and their consequent ignorance?

In asking that question, the President was alluding *inter alia* to Dr William Makgoba, then head of the Medical Research Council, and MRC AIDS research boss Professor Slim Karim. This was following the former's statement in Parliament on 28 October 1999, after reading the manuscript of my literature review *Debating AZT: Questions of safety and efficacy*, that 'There ... exists a large volume of scientific literature alleging that, among other things, the toxicity of this drug is such that it is in fact a danger to health. These are matters of great concern to the Government as it would be irresponsible for us not to heed the dire warnings which medical

researchers have been making.’ To which Makgoba retorted brilliantly, sounding just like you: ‘I’ve read nothing in the scientific or medical literature indicating that AZT should not be given to people.’ With Karim chiming in similarly that there’s ‘no new evidence in the medical literature in the last year [1999] on the adverse effects of AZT’. Right after the publication of a whole lot. Are you friends with these guys? Because you sure sound as though you’re on the same wave-length. And I’m referring to the lower frequencies.

*Debating AZT: Mbeki and the AIDS drug controversy* (as I renamed the book for publication) is sold out now, but it’s online on my website (address in letterhead above), and on others all over the world, where it can be downloaded and printed free. Although it’s five years old this month, the basics are there.

For lazy people with short attention spans I’ve enclosed *Introducing AZT: ‘A World of Antiretroviral Experience’*. It’s only a dozen pages or so, so it shouldn’t be too much of a strain on you. What’s more, it’s not all hard scientific and medical data in the subject about which you foolishly claim there’s a dearth: it’s spiced for humorous effect with plenty of statements like yours by our country’s most highly respected AIDS experts and drug activists, which I’ve highlighted. (You’re in there too now.) And although brief, it contains excerpts from or synopses of the most pertinent research reports (‘garbage’ you call them) substantiating my statements about AZT’s general cellular and foetal toxicity, which you alleged in the M&G to be false. Matters that are common

knowledge to everybody but morons in your business. As just a glance at your bible of therapeutics, *Martindale*, will confirm.

*Introducing AZT* is completely up to date, you'll see, with the very latest 'garbage' presented a couple of weeks ago on how AZT and similar AIDS drugs cause wasting in people swallowing them. Along with this month's 'garbage' reporting that AZT exposure *in utero* results in stunted head and body growth (measured at 18 months). Just as it's been reported to cause persistent neutropenia (assessed in 8 year-olds). That's apparently permanent neutrophil depletion – depletion of the white blood cells that immunologists say fight infections. Paediatric AIDS you might say, if you've got any brains, induced by AZT.

The longer document enclosed is a collection of letters to the Medicines Control Council under the title, *Poisoning our Children: AZT and nevirapine in pregnancy*. It comprises a comprehensive review and detailed analysis of the 'garbage' in the research literature on the foetal toxicity of AZT. After reading it, the most thorough-going, rigorous analysts of the molecular pharmacology of AZT, Australian biophysicist Eleni Papadopulos-Eleopulos and her colleagues, remarked to me, 'Clearly your knowledge base in this subject extends far beyond ours.' But you know better than this apparently. You're cleverer than them.

I've also enclosed their first paper on AZT. Because it's unusually long and technically detailed, this 'garbage' was published, in a special supplement to the prestigious academic medical journal *Current Medical Research and Opinion* in May 1999. Would it be a safe bet to assume that it's total news to you? President Mbeki has

read it and sent it around to local scientists for comment, and has twice been quoted in the media referring to the critical AZT triphosphorylation bottle-neck problem discussed in it. My guess is that you have no idea what this means. In fact I'm certain of it.

I won't burden you with their other big piece of 'garbage' on the drug, 'Mother to Child transmission of HIV and its Prevention with AZT and nevirapine', because it's very long indeed – so long it had to be published privately as a monograph – and on your own showing you're not much of a reader. And to be honest, I don't think you'd understand it anyway. I have a co-authorship credit: the principal authors think that after about a decade of researching these drugs intensively I've come to know what I'm talking about, and that I don't just make stuff up. It's posted on my website.

Nevirapine is only cursorily dealt with in *Poisoning our Children*; it gets the full treatment in another book of mine currently in press, *The trouble with nevirapine*, also online on my website. It's an extensive political history and review of the pharmacology literature. 'Garbage', as you say, and here we agree.

Typically of dull-eyed, pot-bellied medical experts, you propose that all's well with AZT because it's still registered by the FDA and other corrupt and indolent drug regulatory authorities. Like ours. You might feel less complacent after taking the trouble to inform yourself of the circumstances in which AZT came to be licensed by the FDA, and other agencies in a mindless domino tumble, set out in my history of this scandal in *Licensing AZT*, enclosed and on my website.

I assume you missed the British HIV Association's revised draft guidelines released in May this year – now sneakily sidling away from recommending AZT any longer, due to the fact, the BHIVA explains, that the drug causes wasting in people taking it. Which is not surprising considering its inventor Professor Richard Beltz's account to me that he synthesized the drug in 1961 as an experimental cell poison to poison cells. And so naturally wishing me: 'I hope you succeed in persuading your government not to make AZT available.' All this and more you'll read in *Inventing AZT*, enclosed and on my website.

Why is it that time and time again lawyers and politicians in South Africa show that they have a much better knowledge of the AZT toxicity and efficacy literature than the smug and know-nothing slobs who hold themselves out as our country's medical experts? Like that other really bright guy, Professor Jerry Coovadia, telling such jokes as: 'to speak of side effects is contrary to what the scientific evidence suggests', and 'There is no question in the minds of scientists that the government contributes to a climate that raises the possibility that ... antiretrovirals are toxic.' As if they aren't. And very. This is the 'Professor of HIV-AIDS Research' who chaired the 13<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Conference in Durban in 2000, and the first South African AIDS Conference in 2003. The big time AIDS expert.

Not as if you people have any excuse: the 'garbage' that I've reviewed has been published, not only in lesser-known, high-class specialist journals, but in well-known, popular ones sold to the medical mob: *Lancet*, *AIDS* etc. So you can't get away with hey, I

wouldn't know, I'm not an expert, sorry. I only work here. At the children's hospital.

Would you now kindly issue a public apology for having insulted me by insinuating in such a sleazy manner that in making my matter-of-fact statements about AZT, known even to the first-years you teach, I'm not telling the truth? Suggesting I go around telling lies. When it's obvious that this is either your problem or else you seriously need new glasses. Or perhaps you just can't be bothered reading past the dazzling, colourful drug advertisements in your journals. Or maybe you've forgotten the meaning of big words like triphosphorylation, lipoatrophy, neuropathy, hepatotoxicity, cardiotoxicity, haematological toxicity, mitochondrial toxicity, myopathy and so on. If you ever knew them.

Where did you get your degree?

When are they retiring you?

ADV ANTHONY BRINK

Convener and National Chairman: TIG

Cc: Government, ANC, other interested parties, and online at [www.tig.org.za](http://www.tig.org.za)

Encl: 1. *Introducing AZT: 'A World of Antiretroviral Experience'*

2. *Poisoning our Children: AZT and nevirapine in pregnancy*

3. 'A critical analysis of the pharmacology of AZT and its use in AIDS'. *Curr Med Res Opin.* 1999;15 Suppl 1:S1-45.

Review.

4. *Licensing AZT*

5. *Inventing AZT*

(All publications may be downloaded from the above website and printed free of charge.)

PS: a note

During tea at a symposium on 24 November on an unrelated subject, a youngster was pointed out to me as Alex Myers, author of the other letter published in the M&G, in which he proposed that I'm 'dangerous' and 'gravely misguided', if not 'psychopathic', and so 'must be stopped'. When I approached him to chat with a smile and a hand stretched out to shake his, he recoiled at the mention of my name, blurting, 'I don't want to talk to you', and anxiously retracted his right arm as if I was presenting him with a tarantula. My sons told me the following day that he goes to their school. They'd heard about it at lunch-break from his sister.