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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

July 31, 1996

Honorable June Gibbs Brown  
Inspector General  
Department of Health and Human Services  
330 Independence Avenue S.W.  
Room 5246 Cohen Building  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Ms. Brown:

I am writing to request an inquiry into possible misuse of federal funds intended for research on Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) raised by author Hillary Johnson in her book, Osler's Web. In Osler's Web, Ms. Johnson asserts that CFS poses a serious public health threat which has not been given adequate attention by our nation's government health agencies, like the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and that progress in addressing the causes of CFS may have been hampered due to possible misuse of federal funds by these agencies.

*existence?*  
As it stands today, while the CDC has quietly acknowledged the cause of the syndrome, there is no definite knowledge of the cause of this syndrome, no knowledge of how this syndrome is contracted, no knowledge of how to contain its spread, no knowledge of how to cure people of it, and no public warning by the CDC on how to contain its spread. Further, there has been an assertion by author Hillary Johnson that certain government agencies have even covered up the existence of this significant public health issue.

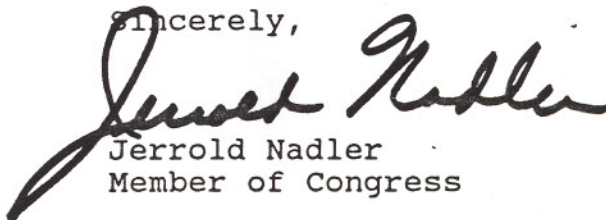
Ms. Johnson has asserted in her book, as well as in interviews and in public appearances on "Good Morning America" and in other major venues, that CFS is a real disease caused by a real pathogen, HHV-6, but that the CDC has attempted to portray CFS as a psychosomatic illness instead. She alleges that CFS is a major, debilitating illness with enormous public health consequences. In over 720 pages, based upon nine years of investigation, she sets out to prove that CFS is an infectious disease that attacks the brain and leaves its victims totally devastated.

Ms. Johnson asserts that there already exists ample clinical and epidemiological evidence to support her conclusion, but the CDC is hide-bound in its determination to ignore this evidence -- at the public's peril. She believes that the CDC refuses to draw the obvious conclusion from this evidence because a handful of long-time CDC senior scientists and administrators have invested their reputations in the hypothesis that CFS is not a real illness. She charges that CDC scientists and other scientists who have attempted to draw the same conclusions that she has drawn have been ostracized and denied federal funding.

In Osler's Web, Ms. Johnson makes a number of allegations that raise questions as to the appropriate use of federal funds. Because of the implications for public health and the serious impact upon the public's confidence in our government health agencies, Ms. Johnson's allegations deserve the most immediate and serious attention.

I respectfully request that you investigate this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerrold Nadler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress