

effect can be established only by identifying and tracking the toxins from the organisms.

The Morris study, which was released last week, has been the subject of some disagreement between Maryland and Virginia, the two states surrounding the bay, with the former unwilling at first to hand over its raw data for scrutiny by the latter.

The Democrat governor of Maryland, Parris Glendening, who is up for re-election next year, has sought to impress the largely urban voters of his state by taking immediate, high-profile action on the fish kills. He has closed several rivers to fishing, and obtained federal assistance and pledges of public concern from President Bill Clinton.

Virginia is taking a far more cautious approach. George Allan, its Republican governor, has refused to close any rivers apart from the Pocomoke itself, despite the discovery of fish with lesions in other waterways.

The two men buried some of their differences at a 'governors' summit' hosted by Glendening last week in Annapolis, Maryland's capital, at which they agreed a five-point plan to cooperate in addressing the problem. Allan continues to express doubts about the Morris study, however. "The number of people who reported memory loss was, I believe, eight," he says. "Our medical professionals haven't had the chance to look at it yet. I'd want our folks to look over it and see if they come to the same conclusions."

A barrage of small-scale federal initiatives was announced last week to pursue the mystery organism. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration have sent teams to the bay and will provide Maryland with emergency grants.

The Centers for Disease Control, which is expected to receive an emergency \$7-million appropriation from Congress for *Pfiesteria* research, will host a conference in Atlanta next week to "plan a comprehensive public health approach to *Pfiesteria*".

The Food and Drug Administration is expected to explore any possibility that toxins from the organism could enter the food chain through menhaden. There is no evidence so far that the toxins accumulate in the fish, officials say.

Pressure for action to restrict the run-off of nutrients from Maryland's large chicken industry in response to the incidents appears to be waning, however. A plan is already in place to cut these by 40 per cent, and Glendening says he has no plans to legislate further.

Carol Browner, EPA's administrator, who attended the Annapolis meeting, said that the fish kills were "a clarion call" to address the flow of nutrients and other pollution into natural waterways. Not everyone is convinced, however. As Karen Steidinger points out, Spanish explorers of the Florida coast were warned about annual fish kills by the Indians — in 1560.

Colin Macilwain

## Cancer scientist takes on top job at Wellcome Trust

[LONDON] Britain's Wellcome Trust, which describes itself as "the world's biggest medical research charity", has chosen a prominent cancer researcher to lead it into the next century.

Mike Dexter, only recently appointed director of the Paterson Institute in Manchester, which is largely funded by the Cancer Research Campaign, will succeed Dame Bridget Ogilvie on her retirement next year.

There had been discussion about whether the trust, whose capital assets, estimated to be worth more than £10 billion (\$16 billion), are even larger than those of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute in the United States, might turn to the business community to recruit its new chief executive.

Instead, the trustees have chosen a widely respected haematologist with experience both as a researcher — he has published more than 300 scientific papers — and in research administration as, for example, chairman of the Medical Research Council (MRC)'s molecular and cellular medicine board.

As one of the three co-founders of Therxsys, Britain's first gene-therapy start-up company which is partly owned by the MRC and has rights to key MRC research on gene vectors, Dexter also has direct experience of working on the commercial applications of scientific discoveries, an increasingly important dimension of the trust's activity.

Dexter says the trust, which has recently taken a lead in establishing a clear career structure for research scientists, "has a responsibility to stand up for the scientific community, and to make sure that funding goes to where the science is excellent, not



Dexter: believes the trust 'has a responsibility to stand up for the scientific community'

necessarily where some other organization would like it to go".

Having been closely involved in gene-therapy research in Manchester, Dexter says he is keen to support the trust's growing involvement in issues concerned with the public understanding of science — and particularly exploring the implications of modern genetics. "It is important that we bring the public along with us," he says.

Dexter's appointment is described as "inspirational" by Gordon McVie, director-general of the Cancer Research Campaign, which has supported Dexter's research since the early 1970s.

"He has a wealth of experience in biology and a terrific grasp of the technical side of experiments, and the fact that he comes from the cancer side of things is no drawback, as we have been closely linked with many important developments in genetics in recent years," says McVie. Ironically, Sir Henry Wellcome specified in his will setting up the trust in 1936 that no money was to be used for cancer research as such.

David Dickson

## £10 million pledged for UK synchrotron source

[LONDON] In an unprecedented move, the Wellcome Trust has announced it is prepared to contribute £10 million to the costs of a new second-generation synchrotron source, known as Diamond, at the Daresbury laboratories in Cheshire, England.

The offer comes as various research councils have been asked by the Office of Science and Technology to give their views on a replacement for Daresbury's current 2-GeV Synchrotron Radiation Source (SRS) which becomes obsolete early in

the next decade.

The heavy use of the facility by researchers has left little doubt that the research councils will be positive. But that will leave open the question of who is prepared to pay for what.

Current estimates are that a new storage ring will cost £100 million — a sum the research councils hope will be found by central government — and that experimental beam lines would cost another £40 million, which the research councils might find out of their own budgets.

Officials of Wellcome Trust have in the past said that the trust should not be expected to make up for the government's failures to maintain a healthy research infra-structure, so the trust may be reluctant to contribute towards the costs of the ring itself.

Despite this uncertainty, David Norman, director of the SRS facility, says he hopes the Wellcome offer will "catalyse" thinking about the value of the facility both in the research councils and in government circles.

D. D.