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NIH Freezes Large Grant to Emory

By DAVID ARMSTRONG

The National Institutes of Health has stopped payments on a \$9.3 million grant to Emory University as it investigates whether the school and one of its prominent faculty members, psychiatrist Charles Nemeroff, properly disclosed his consulting work for drug makers.

Emory said Dr. Nemeroff has stepped down as principal investigator or co-investigator on three NIH research grants until questions about reporting his consulting income are resolved.

Sen. Charles Grassley charged earlier this month that Dr. Nemeroff failed to report hundreds of thousands of dollars he received from drug maker GlaxoSmithKline PLC while heading a government-funded research project studying Glaxo drugs. The payments were a chunk of about \$2.4 million Dr. Nemeroff was paid by drug makers since 2000, according to records obtained by the senator, an Iowa Republican who has been investigating academic-research conflicts.

In a statement Tuesday, Emory officials said Dr. Nemeroff told them, "To the best of my knowledge, I have followed the appropriate university regulations concerning financial disclosures."

Dr. Nemeroff didn't return a telephone message left at his office. An NIH spokesman declined to comment on the matter. Glaxo has said it expects researchers to "proactively disclose" their relationships with the company.

Emory said it was creating a centralized office to oversee and enforce conflict-of-interest issues that takes that responsibility away from the school of medicine, where Dr. Nemeroff works. In addition, the NIH has now placed special requirements on Emory, requiring the Atlanta university to provide an "institutional assurance of compliance" for each NIH grant.

"We are working with the NIH to do whatever is necessary to assure them we are operating in compliance and maintaining an ethical and objective research program," said David Wynes, Emory's vice president for research administration.

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Mr. Wynes said the NIH froze the \$9.3 million grant to study depression treatments in August, after it learned of possible problems with Dr. Nemeroff's disclosures.

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