

The Last Ten Years of Smith-Kettlewell

For the last 10 years, Smith-Kettlewell has been locked in a death-spiral, with Founder Jampolsky at the controls, the Board complicit, and much of the faculty paralyzed by fear or distracted by short-term interests. We may still have the resources to pull out of this dive, but only if our scientists, support staff, friends, and Board can work together to effect an immediate and dramatic change in leadership and policy direction.

Smith-Kettlewell Tries To Mature

The Smith-Kettlewell Eye Research Institute was founded in 1960 by Arthur Jampolsky, Alan Scott, Carter Collins & Edward Tamler, and over the years became internationally known for the work of its scientists in vision and oculomotility. Director Jampolsky was a brilliant and tireless promoter, and when he wasn't busy with his medical practice or fund-raising, was a mostly benign presence, leaving Investigators to do their good work. In an Institute brochure published ca 1993, Jampolsky touted his own "independent streak", and declared his "complete commitment to establishing a research institute that would allow other independent-minded individuals the freedom to pursue whatever direction in research seemed promising".

In the early 1990's, senior faculty considered the Institute's aging demographics, and mindful of the fast-moving scientific environment, began meeting to discuss recruitment strategies. As a "soft money" institution with a modest endowment, SK had never attempted more than opportunistic recruitment, but now felt strong enough to assess its needs in relation to the scientific environment, and run a proper open recruitment program. Norberto Grzywacz, Alan Yuille, and David Schneeweis were the fruit of this highly successful recruitment effort.

Institute Without A Future

At a "staff retreat" at the St Francis Yacht Club on March 17, 2000, Institute policy took a bad turn. Instead of substantive discussion there was self-congratulatory cheerleading, and a talk in which Jampolsky declared there to be too much basic science at the Institute, and that basic science, clinical science, and rehabilitation engineering needed to be "rebalanced" so that SK could "refocus on its core goals". We have since heard appeals to "donor intent", and "founding principles" which, accompanied by a claim that SK had reached its optimal size, made it clear that basic research was about to be drastically curtailed.

By this time, Grzywacz and Yuille had attracted strong funding and built large labs, and sought a seat on the decision-making Review Council. They observed that the research environment was becoming more specialized, and proposed that future recruitment needed to be more focused and the process more transparent. These were taken as unacceptable intrusions on Jampolsky's prerogatives, who rebuffed

their request, and immediately set about framing their collegial proposal as a personal attack on previously hired PIs. Grzywacz, who had received a large recruitment package (necessary to draw talent to our modest, non-tenured, non-academic environment), found that this set him up to be deemed insufficiently grateful for SK's "largess", and he was quickly pushed out of the Institute, with Yuille & Schneeweis departing on their own thereafter. Grzywacz & Yuille now have large, well-funded programs and full Professorships at USC and UCLA, respectively. Word spread quickly of a "flight of talent", and SK PI's moved to recruit Matteo Carandini, a young, rising physiologist, then in Zurich, who had compelling family reasons to relocate to the Bay Area. Repeating the Grzywacz pattern, Carandini was encouraged to join us with a similar, large recruitment package, but soon became concerned about diminishing support for physiology, was found to be insufficiently deferential when he resisted Jampolsky's direction of his research program and objected to his public humiliations, and was expelled from the Institute, with colleagues and Fellows following. Carandini subsequently took one of the top research jobs in the UK, at University College, London. Thus, were our most promising young scientists, along with millions of dollars in endowment and grant funds lost, for no good reason.

Carandini's departure completed the purge of PIs brought to the Institute under our open recruitment program, and was capped by Directorial abortion of the Investigator-initiated recruitment of Nick Priebe in its final stages, retraction of recruitment announcements, and suspension of all future recruitment. Of course, it was only open recruitment that ended; covert recruitment by the Director based on secretive criteria continued. The Priebe debacle severely damaged our reputation in the scientific community; Priebe is pursuing his work on binocularity and amblyopia at University of Texas, Austin. Without a credible recruitment program, it will now be very difficult for SK to attract the strong young investigators that might allow us to refresh our aging faculty and compete in a challenging funding environment.

Directors Without Direction

In 2002, Alan Scott resigned as Co-Director, conditioned on Jampolsky's simultaneous resignation, in hopes of making room for a forward looking, science-oriented Director who would promote the molecular and other approaches increasingly supported by NIH. Unfortunately, and contrary to the Board's 1998 policy to rely on faculty in choosing a new Director, a Search Committee of Board Members, chaired by Jampolsky, ignored the scientists' 13-to-1 preference for candidate Bill Good, and in an astounding act of poor judgment, recommended Henry Metz, a nice guy, but no leader, scientific or otherwise. There seems to be no dissent from the view that Metz' tenure as Director (2004-2008) was simply an opportunity for Jampolsky to act behind the scenes with even less accountability than before. As Metz' contract neared its end, the Board appointed a search committee, similar to the one that chose Metz in 2003, again chaired by Jampolsky, to stage a repeat performance. Three candidates were interviewed and Good won a preliminary vote, but no one was selected, apparently because no one embodied the required combination of apparent competence with

unquestioning subservience. Jampolsky then had himself appointed Acting Director, in which position he remains.

Irreplaceable Loss

Earlier this year, supported by Directorial fear mongering, the Board announced their decision to close SK's most significant capital research investment, our relatively new and costly physiology facility. Physiologist Rob McPeck consequently announced that he was leaving the Institute for SUNY Optometry in NY. Physiology research has always been central to SK, but departures of Grzywacz, Schneeweis, Carandini, and McPeck, retirement of Takuji Kasamatsu and Ed Keller, and discriminatory local support which forced Joel Miller to move most of his physiology work to Birmingham, have left our formerly bustling facility almost deserted. Its closure would spell the end of SK as a credible biomedical research institute: after all, we have no clinical facilities, so how do we imagine NIH would view our research environment for studies involving living subjects of any sort? Although SK is committed to provide physiology facilities through 2013 for Scott & Miller's current NIH project, this Director-engineered fiscal crisis will make it difficult to resist renegeing, and if SK does, these two researchers, with almost 80 years tenure between them, will leave SK, as well.

Just this past month, well-known infant vision researcher, Tony Norcia, after almost 30 years at SK, took a job at Stanford. Do not believe stories that "he is not really leaving" or that "he was going to leave anyway". There have been other important departures, including that of Erich Sutter, brilliant developer of Multifocal ERG, who was abruptly told during Christmas week of 2006 that his lab was being taken from him, after more than a quarter-century of exemplary translational research at SK; he is now at UCSF. Senior support staffer JoAnn Yates, also left reluctantly, to take a similar position elsewhere in San Francisco. Another round of departures is expected at the start of the New Year.

These losses have reduced our NIH-funded programming below required levels and, consequently, we have lost our NIH Training Grant, which funded most of our post-doctoral fellows, and expect to lose our NIH Core Grant, which funds shared facilities. A decade of Board-supported Directorial misbehavior has destroyed our institutional culture, decimated our faculty, demoralized remaining scientists and support staff, and ruined our reputation in the scientific community. There was no good reason for any of this to have occurred!

Was it ever a reasonable plan to terminate basic research in favor of clinical research? Even ignoring 50 years of success in basic research, and the enormous personal and material investments that have supported it, clinical research was never a plausible foundation for SK, if only because we have no clinic! We cannot possibly become a clinical research institute, and attempting to do so will only relinquish our vaunted independence (presumably, to nearby California Pacific Medical Center). How can we hope, much less expect, to replace our departing and retiring scientists by attracting

clinicians to a clinician-saturated Bay Area? Clinician-Scientist K-Min Lee's repeated failures to compete for external funding, and his subsequent departure after many years of Institute support, highlight yet another weakness of the clinician-based plan for SK. Jampolsky's program, stillborn in 2000, was never a plan for the future so much as it was a futile and wrong-headed attempt to return to a familiar past. The rest of the scientific world has moved on, while SK suffers a fatal case of Founder's Syndrome (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Founder's_syndrome).

What Is Your Role In This?

If you are a Board Member, you have failed, again and again, despite repeated pleas and warnings from all levels of SK's faculty, to discharge your responsibility to protect and enhance the Institute that has been placed in your trust. SK's many generous donors would be appalled if they knew how, under your watch, one of the world's leading vision research institutes has been decimated in so short a time. SK's staff and the scientific community have suffered from your irresponsibility, and continue to suffer. Will you now simply walk away?

If you are an SK scientist, you have been far too timid and compliant. If love of science teaches independent thinking and courage in defense of truth, it has not been so evident here. Absent dramatic change at SK, what can you do now? If you are young enough to restart your career elsewhere, don't wait until coming from SK is itself a black mark, or there is no one here to help you make the transition. If you are near retirement, you are certainly already thinking about the next stage of your life. If you are mid-career, you may be stuck. Although resources are diminishing, there will be fewer colleagues to share them with, so you might eke-out a few productive, if lonely, years.

If you are an SK support staffer, your choices are similar to those of the scientists. As scientists depart, taking their grants with them, as NIH "core" support is withdrawn, and as donors find more deserving recipients, there will be less need for your services and less money to support you.

Many of us at SK, discouraged by the Board's inaction and frightened of being made outcasts, decided there was nothing we could do to halt the downward spiral, and apart from occasional mild protests, swallowed hard, and resumed playing what seemed to be the only game in town. It might not have been the only game, however, except that almost everyone, for differing reasons, chose to play it.

If you are a young scientist or clinician, and are considering SK as a place to begin or continue your career, you are either misinformed, desperate, or have been coerced by over-generous inducements. In any case, booking passage on a sinking ship will not mark you as a person of judgment.

If you have been approached about becoming the next SK Director, you should

understand that we, the staff, have had no part in your recruitment, and have good reason to believe that you have been selected to function as a figurehead. Even with the best intentions, it will be a while before you understand how SK operates, and as you climb the learning curve, you will preside over the final stages of our collapse.

Funding agencies are already asking if the SK environment is physically and intellectually sufficient to support the good projects our remaining scientists continue to generate.

Potential donors will consider whether they want more than a tax write-off. A few years ago, SK hired the Greenwood Group to create a fundraising plan, and they are said to have left after concluding it was not possible under current leadership.

Finally, Dr Jampolsky, you must step down as Director, resign as an active member of the Board, and do so without installing a proxy. You need to allow others to try and rebuild what might yet survive as a monument to your youthful vision.

Summary

Over the past decade, Arthur Jampolsky has had a pervasive and destructive influence on SK's scientists, science policy, reputation, and fiscal health; the energy and good judgment that founded and built SK are no longer there. The Board of Directors, and to a lesser degree, the SK faculty, must share responsibility for the Institute's precipitous decline.

Yet, considerable expertise remains at SK – a few senior faculty with experience and institutional memories, some bright, energetic junior faculty, and some knowledgeable support staff – and if we move quickly and decisively, it may be possible to rebuild. The authors write this chronicle of mismanagement and missed opportunity in hope of making it inescapably obvious that only an immediate change of leadership and policy direction can save SK as a productive research Institute. Failing this, SK, together with its facilities, endowment, and staff, will very soon be of only historical interest.

– Joel M Miller, PhD & Alan B Scott, MD • San Francisco • 2009.12.07

Norberto Grzywacz

Professor of Biomedical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, and Neuroscience,
Chair-elect of the Department of Biomedical Engineering, and Director of the
Neuroscience Graduate Program at the University of Southern California.

Dr Grzywacz recounts how his 1999 suggestion of possible new directions for SK research was met with personal attacks and threats by Dr Jampolsky, leading to his departure from SK.

Resent-From: <jmm@ski.org>
From: Norberto Grzywacz <nmg@bmsr.usc.edu>
Date: 11 December 2009 11:43:06p PST
To: Joel M Miller <jmm@ski.org>, abs@ski.org
Subject: Re: Last Years of SK

Dear Joel and Alan,

I was both glad and sad to receive your email on the state of Smith-Kettlewell. The gladness was from receiving an email from old friends of my time at the Institute. But I couldn't be more sad to hear the bad news on the state of SKERI, which lost too many of its members in such a short time.

SKERI was a well-known place for vision research and that was why I joined it in 1991. During my time there, I was happy and thriving in my own retinal research. I had many friends who I'll never forget. Among my friends, I count both of you as well as Suzanne, Takuji, Chris, Preeti, Ed, Ella, Joanne, Jonah, and many others. AJ treated my family and me very well, and we liked him a lot and felt indebted to him. Besides being treated well, I found in SKERI a good environment to flourish and felt that my career was going well. Close to the year 2000, I had two good NIH grants, one to study retinal physiology and one to study retinal development. Moreover, I had recognition from peers, as for example, being selected to be a regular member of one of the NIH study sections. The Institute had been generous to my family and me in other ways, too. SKERI helped me establish a beautiful, expensive lab. And when my mother-in-law got fatally ill, Alan Scott and the Institute came through in a big way to help us out. Thus, at those times, leaving SKERI didn't even cross my mind. I was very happy there.

But as the Year 2000 approached, things at SKERI began to change. The sense among many of the Scientists there was that we needed to modernize ourselves to survive in the long run. The scientific community at SKERI was excellent, but most of us were senior and doing science that was solid but no longer hot. Much of our strength was based on Psychophysics. That was a venerable and time-tested science, which without other aids was going to lose funding power in a few years.

Therefore, representing a prevalent view of many of the SKERI scientists, I stated this

opinion at a Council meeting in 1999 and urged us to look towards the future. I even pointed out many fields in science from which we may want to recruit to become better. To my astonishment, the consequence of that plea was a reprimand letter from AJ. He stated in the letter that I offended other scientists by stating that “our” science was going out of fashion and was no longer hot. And he delivered the letter to me in the most inappropriate of ways. He called me to his office to a private meeting and gave me the letter while making all kinds of threats about my future. I was shocked! That was not the AJ I thought I knew. I knew he had a strong personality, but until that moment, I never saw him be so out of control. Despite my dismay, I explained to him that my position was not personal against anyone at SKERI, but rather a statement of how we could get better. I also requested to him, and later to Alan Scott, that the letter of reprimand be stricken from the files. I also asked other scientists at SKERI to help me in this situation, but to no avail.

The picture became clear to me that SKERI was not going to change any time soon. We were not going to become a modern research institute and the careers of scientists at SKERI were too dependent on AJ’s will. At that time, I had two options: I could stay at Smith-Kettlewell in a scientifically stagnant situation and with a “boss” who had mistreated me. Or I could move. I chose the latter and moved to the University of Southern California in 2001.

Was my judgment poor when I suggested that the science at SKERI should modernize? We could not say that my proposed ideas were the best for the Institute. AJ had other ideas, which according to him would make SKERI fill a better niche. He had been trying his ideas for a long time and undoubtedly, he was a very successful man, while my own personal victories were (and still are) much smaller.

But in the circles where I move these days, people seem to think that my evaluations of the state of things in science and medicine are not always wrong. I moved from SKERI directly into a full professorship at the School of Engineering of the University of Southern California. US News and World Report currently ranks USC as the 26th best university in the US. The ranking of the university has been climbing steadily and we hope to break into the top ten within the next 10 or 20 years. And the magazine ranks our School of Engineering the 6th best in the US, ahead of places like Caltech and other Ivy League universities. At USC, I’m a Professor of Biomedical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, and Neuroscience. Moreover, I’m the director of our Neuroscience Graduate Program. This is a body with 81 labs, 96 graduate students, and countless postdocs and staff persons. Furthermore, I have just been elected the next Chair of the Department of Biomedical Engineering. This chairmanship will start on July 1 next year. The main charge of the chairmanship given to me by the Dean of Engineering will be to grow the department into new directions. Another charge will be to lead the effort to create a new educational and research entity called Health Science and Technology. This entity will link the biomedical research efforts of the Schools of Engineering and of Medicine. I just hope that my judgment doesn’t fail me in these biomedical endeavors.

My own research is fortunately not going too bad either. Some time after moving to USC, I founded a new research center called Center for Vision Science and Technology. This center, which includes over 30 labs, organizes many types of activities related to visual research. From within this center, I recently led a successful effort to receive a 6 million dollar grant from NEI. The grant is to conduct research in technologies for low vision, with emphasis on Age-related Maculopathy. In addition to this research, my lab still works on retinal physiology, development, and pathology, and on other aspects of visual perception.

But all of this doesn't mean that my ideas for SKERI were the right ones 10 years ago. Perhaps AJ's gut feelings were right that SKERI couldn't compete on the scientific front with other better-established centers. Perhaps his ideas were right that we had to make SKERI more clinical. From what I understand, his ideas haven't been working well in recent years. He has had a hard time attracting research clinicians, perhaps because SKERI does not have a clinic. That coupled with the erosion of the scientific base at SKERI; probably cost the Institute much income in terms of grants. This loss of grants was specially bad in years when the financial markets went down, reducing the endowment of the Institute. All of this is very unfortunate and I hope SKERI can turn things around and become again the visionary vision-research powerhouse of times past.

My heart goes out to people like you, Joel and Alan. You were my friends during the times I spent at SKERI and I knew from our multiple conversations that you had the best intentions for the future of SKERI. I knew that to you, SKERI was home and that despite hard times, you stayed on. It was thanks to you and to people like Suzanne, Chris, Tony, and others that SKERI maintained a solid reputation even in the recent hard past. This is why my heart is sad for you. You want SKERI to succeed and unfortunately, the evidence from recent years has not been very reassuring. Losing people like Tony and Matteo, besides seeing people like Takuji and Ed retire, is devastating, because SKERI is not very large. Thus, losing just a few central people changes the character of the place dramatically. Unfortunately, those losses were not unpredictable even at the time I was still at SKERI. In that "sad" council meeting 10 years ago, I warned that we were getting old and that we urgently needed young blood to stay viable. Recent retirements, and those to come in the near future, are a consequence of age. And not being capable of retaining young scientists (like Matteo) are a consequence of not supporting hot, emerging science.

My sincere hope is that the fortunes of SKERI turn around. What would I do if I were there to help point the Institute towards an up swing? It's hard to say, because I don't know how much fat SKERI still has. But I stubbornly still think that my idea of 1999 is right and that it may still work now. By looking at what I said, you will see that I was proposing to move into science that was clinically or translationally relevant. The Institute would thus still maintain its vision-research preeminence and would not be so far from what AJ wanted. But the key difference between his vision and mine would be that I would continue to make the scientists and the grants they bring the foundation of SKERI. Only that SKERI would have a new brand of scientist. This would be a brand

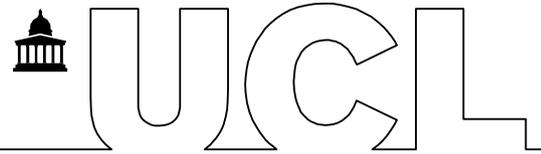
of modern scientists doing modern science.

I do not know if I can help you. But please do not forget that I am your friend and that I'm in eternal debt to you. If you judged that I could help you somehow (in any capacity whatsoever), you should know that I would do it immediately and without any reservation. Despite my sad departure, you and SKERI will forever remain in my heart.

Best,
Norberto

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Dr. Alan Scott
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13 December 2009

Dear Alan,

Thank you for sharing your thoughts on Smith-Kettlewell's near-fatal crisis. I could not agree more with your assessment, and in fact your words remind me of the reasons that brought me to leave last year. Let me add a few words to recount my own experience. If you think they could be of any use, feel free to share them with others (including the Board) as you see fit.

When I joined the Institute in 2002 the atmosphere was cautiously optimistic. The team of scientists was varied and strong, and the institute was teeming with research fellows, who are the lifeblood of a research institution. A core grant from the National Eye Institute rewarded and supported this varied scope of activities.

In the subsequent 6 years I developed strong ties with the Institute and I enjoyed a delightful relationship with my colleague scientists, which resulted in multiple fruitful collaborations. My second son was born in one of Smith-Kettlewell's houses, where we lived in the first year, thus literally bringing home a sense of belonging and a desire for the Institute's success.

In those years, my laboratory produced results that would be hard not to consider impressive. These results were published in about 20 articles (including 5 in *Nature Neuroscience* and 7 in *Neuron*) and considerably strengthened Smith-Kettlewell's presence and prestige in the field of Visual Neuroscience. Though the funding environment was getting increasingly tough, I was able to claw funds and awards from foundations and federal agencies.

Those 6 years, however, were an exercise in frustration in every matter that concerned the Institute's leadership. As soon as I joined I saw with surprise that a new Director was hired against the unanimous advice of the scientists. I was soon to realize that this was one of a series of serious misjudgements on the side of the Board and of its ultimate pilot, Dr. Jampolsky.

The most evident source of frustration concerned the hiring of scientists. The average age of the scientists was such that we immediately needed to start replenishing their numbers. Indeed, it is much easier to attract talent while you have such spectacular scientists in your ranks than later, when your ranks are thin (and you have consequently lost your core grant from the National Eye Institute).

Twice, against the evident disapproval of Dr. Jampolsky, we conducted an open search for candidates, twice we found spectacular candidates, and twice we saw Dr. Jampolsky hijack the process and run it into the ground, making us lose key opportunities. In both cases Dr. Jampolsky came up with specious and unconvincing explanations for his actions.

In the first search, the top candidates were a couple. One of them was one of the top researchers in human brain imaging. The other was a world leader in one of the most promising and exciting fields in eye research: visual prostheses. This candidate had a unique position, having access to the only patients who had received a successful retinal prosthesis implant. Even though in principle he was not the Director, Dr. Jampolsky blatantly scuttled these hires citing motivations that were remarkably weak, backhanded, and vague.

In the second search, the situation dramatically worsened as it exposed Smith-Kettlewell to widespread ridicule. We scientists had unanimously selected a truly excellent candidate, whose research promised to refresh the very core and origin of Smith-Kettlewell's research: amblyopia and strabismus. Dr. Jampolsky opposed this candidate from the beginning and indeed ultimately vetoed the hire. Strange requests were made to the candidate (who even agreed to write an essay on the pet subject of Dr. Jampolsky!), and Smith-Kettlewell started being derided for being headed by an eccentric, misguided and antiquated founder.

Had the Institute hired these researchers, it would now be a leader in three key areas: "Effects of Attention in the Human Visual Cortex", "Cortical Integration of Binocular Input", and "The Effects of Visual Deprivation". These are the titles of the three major NEI grants that would now be in Smith-Kettlewell's name and instead belong to the universities who hired those candidates. To this date, moreover, Smith-Kettlewell is still utterly irrelevant in the field of visual prostheses for the blind.

In a bizarre twist, meanwhile, Dr. Jampolsky had forced the hire of a collaborator of his, against the opinion of most other scientists and against clear indications that he would not have succeeded in securing his own grants. Sure enough, this researcher failed to obtain a single grant, has cost Smith-Kettlewell significant funds, and has now departed. Compare this failure with the spectacular performance of Dr. Wade, an internal candidate who was hired thanks to the enthusiasm and support of the scientists, and who has obtained major funding and widespread respect.

The detrimental leadership of Dr. Jampolsky has led to numerous other problems and to a toxic atmosphere that led to the departure of much of the key talent at Smith-Kettlewell. I will

not bore you with all the details: you have given a very precise timeline and I should not add much to those thoughts. However, I would like to mention three highlights.

First, there was the attack led by Dr. Jampolsky onto scientists performing basic research. Over the last four decades, basic research has been Smith-Kettlewell's strength, while more applied and translational approaches have had – with a few notable exceptions – less success. Mysteriously, in the fifth decade of the Institute, Dr. Jampolsky decided that "donor intent" (of which of course he is the sole judge) was not for the Institute to engage in basic research, and thus withdrew precious oxygen from this successful and productive portion of the Institute. Internal funds for research fellows were to be denied to scientists conducting basic research. External funds were made harder to obtain, by imposing that basic researchers start the process of grant writing months and months in advance of the deadlines.

A capable leader would have nurtured its most productive scientists and indeed supported them in the extremely harsh funding environment of those years. An effective leader would have found positive and not punitive ways to encourage more translational approaches, e.g. by obtaining additional funds and earmarking them for this end.

Second, there was the negative atmosphere that was created as the financials of Smith-Kettlewell deteriorated and expenses were reined in. The large set of support staff was cut down with the axe, key services were reduced, and the availability of funds to support research fellows was brought effectively to zero. But little was done to curb the major expenses at the top of the Institute. The salaries of the top personnel at every non-profit are freely available on the web, and it became apparent and widely discussed that our tiny Institute was spending about \$800,000 a year to support not one but three top managers: a Chief Executive Officer, a Director, and of course Dr. Jampolsky himself, who to the astonishment of everyone kept on awarding himself a very nice salary.

From an elder member of the Board one would if anything expect an infusion of cash (belonging to them or to their friends), not a major expenditure. We scientists were working hard to bring in the funds to pay our own salaries and laboratories and delivering considerable indirect funds to run the whole Institute, and the Institute was spending its limited funds in this peculiar way.

Third, there was the puzzling performance of the Board. The Board seemed to take all of its information from Dr. Jampolsky and to be completely piloted by him. It hired some (expensive?) consultants and then refused to enact their recommendations, as these would lead to a major weakening of Dr. Jampolsky's power. Once two members of the Board asked me out for lunch, presumably to ask me my opinions, but who else did they invite? The Director of the Institute. They might as well have invited Dr. Jampolsky to come along. As might be expected, the conversation centered on the weather and similar topics.

Later, as I was leaving, I witnessed the comic outcome of the process of choosing a new Director, and of putting Dr. Jampolsky in charge of the search. Dr. Jampolsky selected three candidates, two external and one internal. The first two patently did not want the job, and the third was a spectacularly good scientist and clinician who should have had the job years earlier but instead has mysteriously fallen out of favor. None of the three got an offer and, Dr. Jampolsky in the end appointed himself. In allowing all this to happen, the Board made a grave mistake.

Alan, you know Dr. Jampolsky much better than I and probably have insight into his actions that I don't have. What I cannot explain is how he can be allowed to fly the Institute to the ground after so many indications that at this stage in his career he is a spectacularly poor choice for a leader. In fact it is easy to assign all the blame for Smith-Kettlewell's trouble to Dr. Jampolsky, but rather this responsibility should be laid at the feet of the Board, who has allowed this incompetent and capricious leader to steer each and every important decision in exactly the wrong direction.

My view is that Dr. Jampolsky considers Smith-Kettlewell's funds (some of which indeed he valiantly obtained half a century ago) as a donation to his person so that he may fashion himself as a scientist till the last day of his life. The Board surprisingly lets this happen, and against demonstrated incompetence they consistently put him in charge of key choices such as his own succession. This may all be legal but it is certainly immoral. If I were in such a Board I would sooner resign than let this happen.

I should add that though I have a dismal opinion of Dr. Jampolsky as a leader I don't dislike him as a person. In fact, after my disagreements with him and my consequent departure from the Institute my career has taken a very positive turn. The UCL Institute of Ophthalmology is an institution that truly makes a difference in eye research, and is supported by the strength of a major university. Here I have a fully paid salary thanks to an endowed chair from GlaxoSmithKline, I have a voice in the shaping of my research environment, and I was able to attract more than \$4 million in funding in my first two years here.

I would have been quite happy to stay in at Smith-Kettlewell if there had been a supportive and productive environment, and instead I was effectively forced by Dr. Jampolsky to look elsewhere. Though I am thankful to Dr. Jampolsky for this positive turn in my career, I am not sure Smith-Kettlewell and its Board should feel the same way.

Yours,



Matteo Carandini, PhD
GlaxoSmithKline / Fight for Sight Professor of Visual Neuroscience

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

WILLIAM JAMES HALL
33 KIRKLAND STREET
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

December 13, 2009

Dear Members of the Smith Kettlewell Board

It has come to my attention that a few of you may regard the recent sad chronicle about Smith Kettlewell's decline by Alan Scott and Joel Miller as a personal perspective, inaccurate and to be dismissed. In truth, it is best, most objective account of what has happened at SK over the past decade.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ken Nakayama", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ken Nakayama
Edgar Pierce Professor of Psychology