

CDC chief asks for, and gets, cut to his record \$375K pay

April 30 2018, by Mike Stobbe

The new head of the top U.S. public health agency has asked for—and will receive—a cut to his record-setting pay, federal officials said Monday.

Dr. Robert Redfield Jr.'s new salary was not revealed.

The 66-year-old HIV researcher, who was picked in March to head the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, had been set to earn \$375,000 a year.

That sum was at least \$150,000 more than any previous CDC director had received. It also was well above the compensation of other top federal health officials—including Redfield's boss, Secretary Alex Azar of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

After The Associated Press reported last week that Redfield was making almost twice his predecessor, a U.S. senator opposed to his appointment wrote a letter to Azar asking why he was earning so much.

On Monday, HHS officials said Redfield has asked for a pay reduction because the topic had become a distraction. They said his compensation will be adjusted accordingly, but did not answer questions about what the new sum is or when it will be announced.

Redfield has not been doing media interviews since taking the CDC job, and he didn't immediately comment on the pay cut.

A top HIV researcher, Redfield had no experience working in public health or managing a public health agency.

By private industry standards, Redfield's CDC salary was modest for someone with his resume, and it was a significant pay cut from what he was making in his previous job at the University of Maryland.

But \$375,000 was exceptionally high for the field of government public health, and it was high compared with other high-level federal officials.

Redfield is being paid under a salary program called Title 42, which was established to attract health scientists with rare and critical skills to government work.

Azar, the head of the National Institutes of Health and the head of the Food and Drug Administration aren't paid under Title 42 and make less than Redfield.

In a statement last week, an HHS spokeswoman defended Redfield's pay.

"The recruitment of Dr. Robert Redfield was a rare opportunity to hire one of the world's leading virologists," said the spokeswoman, Caitlin Oakley. "Dr. Redfield has over 30 years of experience as a groundbreaking scientist, academic researcher, and clinician who has been a global leader in the fight against one of the most devastating infectious diseases of our time—HIV/AIDS."

U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, a Washington Democrat, wrote an April 26 letter to Azar questioning how the decision was made to pay Redfield that much and whether Title 42 was used appropriately.

On Monday, Murray said her questions remain unanswered. She said

"the public still deserves thorough answers" about why Redfield was hired under Title 42 and at such a high salary.

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Citation: CDC chief asks for, and gets, cut to his record \$375K pay (2018, April 30) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-04-cdc-chief-375k.html>

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