

Examining the legacy of W. French Anderson—'father of gene therapy' and convicted child molester

[Dr. W. French] Anderson has been hailed as the father of gene therapy and was honored at George H.W. Bush's White House. In 1991, the New York Times ran a laudatory [story](#) headlined "Dr. Anderson's Gene Machine."

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But in July 2006, Anderson was convicted of three counts of lewd acts on a child and one count of continuous sexual abuse, including fondling her genitals. The sexual assaults started in 1997 when the girl was 10 and Anderson was 60.

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This May, Anderson, now 81, was released on parole. Two weeks later, STAT spoke to him. We were interested in his views — as someone who'd once been near the pinnacle of medical science — of the research advances during his years behind bars.

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Anderson was wistful about how science had marched on without him and described scenes one doesn't associate with prison life: an inmate trying to keep up with genetics, eagerly opening envelopes from his wife stuffed with issues of Science, Human Gene Therapy, and Genetic Engineering News.

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Even when Anderson summed up his life by saying, "I used to be famous and now I'm infamous," it seemed matter-of-fact more than rueful. He feels like Muhammad Ali, he said, an icon at the top of his game whose life and career were derailed by what he calls a flawed, unjust system.

Read full, original post: [Out of prison, the 'father of gene therapy' faces a harsh reality: a tarnished legacy and an ankle monitor](#)