

NRC

Six Research
(Kinsey)

	SEP 11 1944	

September 8, 1944

Dear Dr. Kinsey:

On return from vacation I find your letter of August 26th with its enclosures. I hasten to answer, and let me say at the very outset that neither I personally nor this Division of the Foundation nor the Foundation as a whole wishes to have or has thought of any repudiation of your work. There is no possibility of my being able to come to Cleveland, and furthermore I think in this letter I can make comment quite full enough to satisfy you and Professor Yerkes so that no meeting will be necessary though I confess it would be a satisfaction for it would allow me a measure of repetition and reassurance to you that would be a pleasure to give.

There are various ways which The Rockefeller Foundation has followed in support of medical research. I would like to contrast two methods in order to bring out what seem to me to be the essential points under discussion in the letters between yourself and Dr. Yerkes. In several instances the Foundation Trustees appropriate funds to a university in support of some specific project which The Rockefeller Foundation officers have studied, usually after a visit to the individuals concerned, and in this instance the officers take initial, complete and continuing responsibility in recommending to the Trustees that the money be spent for the undertaking that is involved.

Another method which we have followed is to appropriate to the National Research Council, or sometimes to a university, a sum of money in support of research projects which may commend themselves to National Research Council committee members or to special committees in a given university. But in this case there is a significant difference in that Foundation officers do not have any rôle in finding or deciding upon what research projects are to be supported with the funds which they have put into the hands of other agents to use according to their discretion. For example, a few years ago we made a grant of several thousand dollars to the University of Rochester for the support of research work in the Medical School. This fund is called a fluid research fund and the decision and selection of projects on which the money was spent remained entirely the responsibility of a committee in the Medical School, and I did not know who would be or who had been aided by this fund until the end of each fiscal year when a report was given as to how the money was divided.

If you will look up in THE SCIENTIFIC MONTHLY for May 1944 an article that I wrote regarding the strategy of medical research you will see on page 367 and again on page 368 a discussion of some of the considerations involved in our making grants of this character - grants in which

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our own selection and responsibility for finding good projects is deliberately decentralized or devolved upon persons we expect and indeed have found to be more competent judges than ourselves. I don't think that it is quite reasonable to ignore or waive the role which the direct recipients of a grant of this character play. I for one want them to have and to feel the full credit for finding and selecting first-rate research programs. We have had some very satisfactory experiences with this method of making money available for research, and the National Research Council's Committee for Research in Problems of Sex is a clear-cut example of such a success. They deserve full credit for the decision they made in support of your work, and even if the name of The Rockefeller Foundation may be in some quarters a more readily comprehended sponsor there would be no honesty whatever in my stating or tacitly being allowed to be understood that the support you have received from that Committee is to be credited directly to the Foundation. The fact that this Committee of the National Research Council receives its support from The Rockefeller Foundation is a simple and accurate statement, and I think that if the Foundation were even approaching a mood of repudiation it would address itself to Dr. Yerkes in the first and in the last instance, but as I have said, that is not the case.

I have no objection whatever to your saying that the grant comes from the National Research Council and that that Committee is supported by The Rockefeller Foundation, and in any discussion I have no objection to your saying that the Foundation officer involved approves of what you are doing. I do believe, however, that you would not be wise in appearing to by-pass or omit the Committee's relationship in any printed statement or public announcement. I think you will realize too that confusion of understanding as to the relationships in a matter of this kind can put us as Foundation officers in an embarrassing position since we are not in a position to by-pass the National Research Council's Committee nor do we wish to seem to criticize or impute their judgment by writing to inform ourselves about circumstances for which we are not directly responsible and of which we do not know enough. There have been a good many instances where, had the Foundation emphasized its support of some singularly fortunate bit of research, the credit and the satisfaction would have been taken away from those who had every right to it. We are convinced that this is not fair nor wise, and if I underscore and emphasize your relationship to the National Research Council's Committee it is but one way in which I can show my appreciation and gratitude to that Committee for finding and deciding to support a project better than I suppose I could have discovered, and because I would hate to have the reputation built up for the Foundation that it lets committees do the work but when convenient and advantageous takes the credit or the responsibility out from the committee's hands and feels free to make any such decisions without reference to the very persons on whom it really depends.

One aspect of your letter has troubled me a good deal. Please don't believe that I am unaware of the complexities and difficulties and the constant struggle it is to do work that you are engaged on. What troubles me is that I apparently have not made you realize that I do understand these difficulties and that I do very highly value the tenacity and energy that you use in meeting these difficulties. If I could say anything that would set

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your mind at rest on this point I would do so, and the more gladly since it is so sincerely felt by me.

One final remark or reflection that I offer for whatever it may be worth. I believe that the public and the scientific world must increasingly realize that the foundations are not the only responsible and competent purveyors of support to research work. I have tried in this direction to increase the knowledge of the public concerning what the National Research Council has done and is prepared to do, and I think that grants to committees of the National Research Council, though they never will be slurred over or evaded as Foundation responsibilities, can sensibly be the means of increasing the confidence of the public and of the scientist in the wisdom of choices made by such committees in the field of research work.

I do hope that this letter clarifies all of the points of uncertainty in your mind. If it doesn't, please feel free to write me again without any kind of hesitation.

Yours sincerely,

ALAN GREGG

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AG:SIR

cc: Dr. Robert M. Yerkes