



WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

June 6, 1968

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Dear Bob:

I discussed your possible involvement in the feasibility study during our phone conversation. If it will be possible for you to spare two days of your time to help me on this matter, I will appreciate it. Remember I am after quality and not quantity of advice, and your participation will be priceless. I thought I would outline the problem to you very briefly below.

Washington University has been asked to undertake a feasibility study by The Council for Tobacco Research which may have many immediate and long-range consequences of considerable importance. In proceeding with this project I would like to obtain your counsel and advice.

Basically the problem is as follows:

The National Center for Health Statistics published a report last year entitled Cigarette Smoking and Health Characteristics based on a study conducted by the National Health Survey in which comparisons were made between the incidence of disease and disability reported by smokers and non-smokers.

Now whether or not smoking causes general disability is obviously a question of more than academic interest. This is particularly true since all conclusions have been based on a massive interview effort which is almost impossible to repeat except through the National Health Survey.

This is now especially relevant since the report leaves much to be desired and raises many questions concerning the actual nature of findings which, by their very mass, are not readily available for public review.

It has been pointed out repeatedly that a mechanism is badly needed by which the public, the scientific community, an affected industry, and the Public Health Service may reach agreement of what the data actually show in such instances. The process of public review leading to open consensus forms the very cornerstone of scientific practices by which "factual" knowledge is established.

Rather than become involved in pointless controversy, the Council for Tobacco Research has asked Washington University to examine the feasibility of providing a review mechanism and public analysis by sponsoring a conference in which the merit of these data will be examined in detail by a panel of experts. This panel is to consist of individuals whose investigative skill and soundness of scientific judgment has been amply demonstrated in the past. Panel members will be selected from public and private institutions

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and the Government services according to their competence and reputation, irrespective of any previously stated views toward the issue of smoking and health. In addition, modern data processing techniques will be utilized to give each panel member access to the relevant data and to a ready library of analytical procedures by which these data may be examined in an instant.

We recognize that the organization of such a conference and the evaluation of the numerous data will be beset by many difficulties. For these reasons I am undertaking right now a feasibility study which I hope to conclude this summer and for which I hope I may count on your advice and counsel.

We are asking a small number of individuals to serve as advisors to the feasibility study. It will be the purpose of the feasibility panel to help us arrive at a judgment concerning this whole enterprise.

There will be two meetings of the feasibility panel. At each meeting the panel will be presented, for their judgment, a number of choices open at the time and their responses and discussion to these problems elicited. The first meeting will take place some time in June and concern itself with the choice of alternatives open to the feasibility study itself. The second get-together will be some time in July or early August and will be devoted to deciding on the basis of information accumulated by our staff whether or not the conference would be feasible, and, if feasible, decide on a balanced group of participants and the format of the conference itself.

Since the advisory group will be small, we may be able to finish our business in less than a day for each of the two meetings.

I do sincerely hope that you can be persuaded to let me have the small amount of your time that I ask for. However, if you feel that for any reason whatsoever it would be unadvisable for you to participate, I will accept the refusal without question.

Best regards to your charming wife,



Theodor D. Sterling

TDS:hk

P.S. Bob Eckart will be on. Thanks.

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