

Executive Committee

February 27, 1957

Mr. Walter M. Shohl
Hotel Alms
Cincinnati, Ohio

Dear Mr. Shohl:

I am sending to you, on the advice and with the consent of Dean Dorst and President Langsam, a memorandum prepared in The Kettering Laboratory on "The Use of Human Experimental Subjects."

Certain questions were raised in this Laboratory some months ago on this subject, and it seemed wise to look into the policies of other experimental groups and organizations, and to develop a policy for our own guidance. It was not easy to find formal or official pronouncements on the subject, and it is my impression, from the experience of some of my associates in their attempts in this direction, that the problem has been looked at officially and then sidestepped, on the theory, perhaps, that this is a problem for physicians to solve on their own responsibility. Be this as it may, it seemed wise to bring our efforts to the attention of the Dean and the President, who then agreed that it would be advisable to present it to you for some decision as to the concern of the Board, or for advice to us, as the case may be.

Needless to say, this is a complicated matter. I am prepared to deal with it within our own fairly simple field of activity, in accordance with the provisions of the memorandum, and I am not concerned about it unduly, from the aspect of the responsibility of the University. Moreover, I am by no means certain that our procedures and attitudes will apply to the observations, some of which are frankly experimental, that are made on patients. I do know that experimental laboratories, as differentiated from hospitals, are highly vulnerable when they undertake any experiments on people, especially people who are ill in any way, or who may be rendered ill, even briefly and insignificantly (in symptomatic terms), by any experimental procedure. The problem, of course, is one of moral purpose and judgment and of prudence. The death of a Walter Reed in a self-conducted experiment, involving the truth of the hypothesis of the insect transmission of a lethal disease, was certainly an example of heroic self-sacrifice either to scientific curiosity or to human welfare (however one may choose to look at it). The matter has a different appearance if another person is the

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