

The problem of eye disease and blindness is becoming increasingly important, particularly in its geriatric aspects. In my opinion, ophthalmologic research and teaching would be greatly stimulated by a separate institute. The Director, of course, would be responsible for eye alone. He would be able to devote his entire time to the program. I am somewhat concerned that blindness has not been given a position as prominent as cancer, heart disease, stroke and even other fields of medicine where greater knowledge is needed.

Sincerely yours,

HAROLD G. SCHEIE, M.D.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO,
Chicago, Ill., February 15, 1966.

HON. HERBERT TENZER,
House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

MY DEAR MR. TENZER: Thank you for writing concerning H.R. 12373, introduced by Mr. ROONEY. I know what an active role you played in the establishment and subsequent development of the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness and of your desire to see ophthalmic research flourish. In the early years of the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness the major portion of their budget was diverted to neurology with the excuse that there were no adequate areas in which to spend research money wisely. With the expansion of ophthalmic research the complaint was that the research projects were not of comparable quality to those in neurology. This misinformation persisted although the research requests were judged by different committees, with the neurologists having one basic and one clinical committee while the eye programs were judged solely by a basic committee. Now with the tightened budget of the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness, worthwhile research programs in ophthalmology already approved are not being funded. Testimony before the House Subcommittee on Appropriations for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare had led to specific recommendations for the allocation of funds for ophthalmic research. This has led to a sequestering of funds as required by the exact interpretation of the subcommittees' report, but not to an increased dollar amount for ophthalmic research.

It all points up, I believe, the need for an independent institute whose major attention is upon blinding disease and the mechanisms of vision. Such an institute would be able to attract an institute director and deputies of talents comparable to other institutes. This is not possible at the present time when a deputy directorship (one of several) is offered ophthalmology. I know very little about the mechanism of implementation of a bill such as that proposing a national eye institute. I should hope however that the activities, laboratories, funds, et cetera now encompassed in the blindness portion of the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Blindness would be turned to the National Eye Institute. I believe that this constitutes my major concern in respect to this legislation.

Thank you for your letter.

Very truly yours,

FRANK W. NEWELL, M.D.,
Professor and Chairman, Division of Ophthalmology.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
SAN FRANCISCO MEDICAL CENTER,
San Francisco, Calif., February 15, 1966.

HON. HERBERT TENZER,
House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. TENZER: Thank you for your letter of February 10 asking for comments on the proposal for a National Eye Institute as suggested by Congressman FRED B. ROONEY, of Pennsylvania. I am very happy to learn that you are going to cosponsor H.R. 12373. In my opinion a National Eye Institute is long overdue and is greatly needed at the present time as a forward step in the prevention of blindness program that is of concern to all ophthalmologists, and indeed to all