

J. Letters

March 14, 1992

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Dear Werner,

First, about the IPEG Program. Turan and I met yesterday and completed the program, worked out the program printing, and made suggestions regarding the social calendar for the meeting. It looks good.

With regard to the MacNeill *et al* report in *Neuropsychobiology*. I agree that you accept what you deem useful. When reviewers differ as to their recommendations, I do not think 'democracy' is effective; the editor must make a judgement based on the merits of the paper [as he sees it] using the advice of reviewers for specific points.

You ask how I proceed as editor of *Convulsive Therapy*. I see the role of the Editor as 'gatekeeper' and as a 'leader'. I try to determine whether an original article asserts something new, whether it is likely to be true, and whether it is likely to be 'true' in a few years. Articles that meet these criteria and the support of reviewers are accepted with enthusiasm. Other articles are accepted if they usefully teach -- an experience that might be useful to others, or a technical point that has merit. If the report is an opinion piece -- a commentary or editorial -- I ask that it be related to something published recently, or that it makes a new argument. Finally, reviews are very helpful if they are reasonably complete (I check the citation lists myself) and if the conclusions may be helpful to the reader, whether as a student or as a researcher.

The Editor is expected to stimulate and request articles that make new points. I often leave a scientific meeting with notes that lead to letters and later to editorials or reviews which I publish.

The section on pharmaco-EEG in *Neuropsychobiology* has not made a concerted effort to improve our practice. As I recall the articles, they are mainly archival reports of studies that follow standard models. Many are not definitive, weakening our message. They have rarely been accompanied by critiques or editorials.

The next IPEG meeting has two important issues that warrant publication. The papers of the Classification Symposium may usefully be published, perhaps as a special supplement, with a discussion of the relevance of animal models for clinical psychopharmacology. Opinions are divided between the pharmacologists who have a distinct faith that rat studies are the road to defining new psychoactive entities [after all, it is their livelihood], and the clinicians who recall that almost all that is useful in clinical psychiatry has come from clinical efforts, and that so far, no new compound or idea has come from pharmacologic studies.

The PK/PD symposium exemplifies a most useful application. It deserves a separate publication, with a discussion of the BGA and FDA positions, and arguments that pharmaco-EEG studies in man have something to offer clinical medicine, something more than is offered by routine PK/PD testing when applied to psychoactive (and neurologic active) drugs.

My principal argument with Künkel was that he appeared passive in attitude, leaving the section archival and 'no fun' to read. Müller-Oerlinghausen made a good point in the latest issue of *Pharmacopsychiatry*, when he accepted your three papers and then asked me to write a commentary. *The 'package' should have been part of the Pharmaco-EEG section of Neuropsychobiology. [Is it premature for two journals to compete for the limited pharmaco-EEG material?]*

As editor of the section in *Neuropsychobiology*, it will take much work; a good beginning can be made at the IPEG meeting where you should try to capture the best papers.

My best regards.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.  
Professor of Psychiatry