

7: letters

July 9, 1966

Dr. John H. Talbott, Editor
Journal of the American Medical Association
535 North Dearborn Street
Chicago, Illinois 60610

Dear Dr. Talbott:

Thank you for your consideration of the study, "Clinical Laboratory Test 'Abnormalities' in Placebo Treated Psychotic Patients." While I do not wish to comment on your decision, which is your prerogative, I would like to comment on your notes.

You suggest the subject may be "belabored." In four years of actively reviewing NIMH grant requests from investigators studying new psychotropic drugs in the severe mentally ill, we found only two groups that systematically collected and assessed clinical laboratory data in placebo treated subjects in parallel with their studies of new drugs. This seeming lack of sophistication (by your reviewers standards) led to our review of our own data, and this report. The early and perhaps premature delisting of iproniazid was not due to the few, possibly incidental fatalities, but the reports of liver dysfunction. These were inadequately controlled, and your reviewers opinion is but one aspect of the spectrum which inadequate studies of this compound have raised.

The comments about "ranges" and statistics are pertinent.

As for the copies submitted - these are not xerox but colitho copies. In view of our educational function, we have regularly typed the final draft of all manuscripts on colitho plates and submitted them to the editors, as well as to our research and publications committees, grantor agencies and departmental chairmen. Your suspicion could have been allayed by a careful examination of the copies or by an inquiry, rather than hasty criticism. We have not submitted this or any other report to two publishers although we have been often sorely tempted to do so considering the extraordinary delays that often occur in reviewing manuscripts.

Thank you for your prompt review and your advice to authors.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry

MF:kp