

December 21, 1965

Dr. Ernst A. Rodin
Lafayette Clinic
951 E. Lafayette
Detroit, Michigan 48207

Dear Ernst,

It is very difficult to write a letter with regard to Dr. Takumi Ikuta which remains objective. Dr. Ikuta joined the Institute more than a year and a half ago upon application and following the recommendation of the Chairman of his Department. After he arrived we found that there were many problems in communication which we ascribed to a language barrier. Since we have had to deal with scientists from many national backgrounds we have, in most instances, been able to resolve this difficulty. However, with Dr. Ikuta, I believe the communication is still hazardous.

Dr. Itil and I were anxious to establish an evoked potential laboratory. Our instructions and recommendations were to replicate some of the studies of Charles Shagass, to ascertain integrity of our equipment. For more than four months Dr. Ikuta carried out many trials and multiple placements in the scalp finally reporting that the amplitudes in the clearest evoked potentials were recorded in the locations reported by Charles. While this was an important confirmation, his inflexibility heralded similar difficulties in the following year.

His principal project was related to the evoked potential at multiple dosages of intravenous pentothal (1, 2, 4 mg/kg). The study was well done and the results were well analyzed. In the absence of concurrent EEG measures of stages of sleep, Dr. Itil and I recommended that the manuscript which he submitted be edited by the deletion of references to sleep (until further studies using EEG criteria for sleep could be done). Dr. Ikuta refused to make any modifications of his report and insisted on its presentation without modification. This issue became a cause celebre with ugly overtones of academic freedom.

At this point I would no longer supervise him and recommended his dismissal. Unexpectedly, his appointment had already been approved and he has, therefore, been in the Department since June without supervision and not carrying out work with any other scientists. While other scientists have been approached to collaborate with Dr. Ikuta, it is my understanding that none have been willing to do so.

As a laboratory technician he is meticulous and diligent. He has become well acquainted with the equipment for this kind of work and while he has limited knowledge of the inherent electronics he has been able to carry out the experiments very well.

Partially because of language and partially because of personality he tends to isolation. I would have little hesitation in appointing him in any situation in which the responsibilities and duties were made clear in writing beforehand, for I believe that his personality is such that he will adhere to the literal interpretation of any contract in which he participates. Our own difficulties have been related to the misinterpretation of the role relationships of supervisor and supervisee, for he has interpreted the appointment here of research fellow as equivalent to an individual research scientist. I do not believe that the University has been willing to accept his position and while I do not know for a fact, I think that his appointment will not be renewed in June.

Finally, I think Dr. Ikuta is an unusual man who could probably function in a specific most satisfactory way in some laboratory (perhaps yours) provided the rules of the game were written out in detail.

My best regards and Best Wishes for the New Year.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry

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P.S. Incidentally, Paul Lowinger presented a fine report of his experiences at a meeting in Florida and I had occasion to tell him of my new appointment and I am pleased to tell you that I have been invited to become a Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the New York Medical College-Metropolitan Hospital in New York. I look forward to establishing another laboratory for quantitative psychophysiological research.