

J. Letters
1966

May 17, 1966

Lorraine B. Torres
International Research Programs Section
Research Grants Branch
National Institute of Mental Health
Bethesda, Maryland 20014

Re: MH 12973-01

Dear Mrs. Torres:

I have read the application for a travel grant to the First International Symposium on Electrosleeptherapy and Electronarcosis with a great deal of interest and I am grateful for the opportunity to have reviewed this problem. While I believe that the problem described and the methods are of significant interest, I am troubled by the absence of any psychiatric interest or participation either in the recent symposium in St. Louis or in the proposed list of participants. Speaking candidly, if one could be assured that at least two qualified American research psychiatrists with clinical experience with either convulsive therapy or electronarcosis were to attend, this application should be recommended for support. The list of invited speakers for Europe contain no names that are familiar to me as psychiatrists or neurophysiologists. Precisely for this reason, and because the proponents believe that the technique induces behavioral changes, the presence of qualified psychiatrists would make worthwhile the expenditure of the additional funds to allow other American physiologists and animal workers to attend.

I had called you last week to obtain some additional reports from Dr. Short, but was fortunate in obtaining much of the needed information from Dr. Alfred Richardson of the Department of Physiology of St. Louis University. Based on the information in the application, and the letters submitted, I would like to specifically answer your request within the guidelines dated August, 1965.

I believe that there is scientific need for this conference, and since the greatest interest has been shown by European organizations, the international meeting

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would be an appropriate place for our scientists to obtain a fruitful degree of communication. The sponsoring agency may be an appropriate one, although, the Society of Biological Psychiatry, were their members interested, might be more appropriate. There is no criticism of the setting, the budget, or the planned program. The principal criticism is with regard to the relevance of this meeting to the National Institute of Mental Health and to a provision for reporting the results to American psychiatry. These two requirements are lacking. For this reason, I would recommend that this grant be approved with mental health funds only if two qualified psychiatrists were known to attend the meeting and were willing to communicate their observations to the psychiatric community. If this condition can be met, I would assign a priority of two.

As additional referees I would recommend Drs. Charles Shagass, Professor of Temple University, Theodore Liberson of the Veterans Administration Facility in Hines, Illinois and William Holt, Professor of Psychiatry at the Albany Medical College.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to review this application.

Sincerely yours,



Max Fink, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry

MF:jmh