

*J. Sellers*

January 24, 1979

Mr. James Kipfer  
Mental Health Association in Michigan  
Lathrup Village, Michigan

Dear Mr. Kipfer,

I am pleased to write this letter on behalf of Dr. Richard Abrams who is being considered for the position of Chairman, Wayne State University Department of Psychiatry.

I met Dr. Abrams when he returned from his military service to complete his psychiatric residency training at the New York Medical College in 1966. Based on his experience with ECT in the Army, we designed a study of ECT which was funded by the NIMH and which was done at the Gracie Square Hospital. The work was done between 1967 and 1972. During that time, Dr. Abrams completed his residency with distinction, and joined our staff as a staff psychiatrist. In rapid progression, he became the chief of the in-patient unit at Metropolitan Hospital, and then moved to Stony Brook where he directed the University service at Central Islip Psychiatric Center. In 1976, he moved to the Chicago Medical School with Dr. Michael Taylor.

Dr. Abrams is an outstanding clinician, researcher and teacher. His clinical work has been innovative and with Dr. Taylor, they have challenged some of the diagnostic concepts which have been current for a number of decades. Their work on the identification of mania, catatonia and bipolar disease is exemplary.

In his teaching, Dr. Abrams has shown excellent skills, particularly in encouraging residents to undertake research projects. A record is seen in the long list of publications which he has with junior personnel. Another evidence has been his rapid rise in academic grade, from assistant professor, 1971-1974, associate 1974-1976 and professor since 1976.

In his research, he has exhibited skill and a thorough knowledge of the literature. His work in convulsive therapy, in directing the ECT studies under MH 15561, has resulted in many publications, particularly regarding the efficacy of unilateral and multiple ECT, the changes in EEG and biochemical parameters, and effects on memory.

His joint efforts in psychopathology with Dr. Taylor have already been alluded to, and it is in this effort that he has shown excellent skills.

Finally, his administrative experience also encourages his consideration for the position of leadership. At the time that he took the position of director of the University Service at Central Islip Psychiatric Center, the unit was little more than a back ward in a primitive state hospital. By the expenditure of much effort and travail, he improved the staffing, trained personnel, obtained the support of the administration, and with the aid of the residents, developed a fine teaching unit, which served to treat patients and as a source of publications and research. (It is fair to say that his successors have been unable to maintain the high standard of academic excellence which he established.)

It is clear that Dr. Abrams has the academic, clinical and research experience to undertake the position of chairman at Wayne State University in psychiatry, and I recommend him highly.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.  
Professor of Psychiatry