

April 2nd, 1973

Stanley Zucker, M.D.,
Chairman, Research Committee,
Veterans Administration Hospital,
Northport, N.Y.

Dear Doctor Zucker,

As you know, we have begun to treat opiate dependent veterans with two of the principal therapeutic modalities available to us - methadone maintenance and narcotic antagonists (cyclazocine).

Methadone maintenance requires the daily administration of methadone. This is both an expensive procedure for the patient and for society, and runs an additional special risk that drug given for intervening days may be sold, lost, stolen, or inadvertently be fatal to non-dependent subjects.

One recent modification of methadone maintenance has been the use of a longer acting opiate, levomethadyl. In my laboratory in New York, we have been responsible for some of the principal work which has demonstrated that levomethadyl in doses between 70 and 100 mg can be given three times a week, for it provides cross-tolerance for periods in excess of 72 hours (indeed, our present experiment is the administration of 100 mg twice weekly, and we are most satisfied with the results). I am writing to propose the transfer of patients who are now on methadone in our outpatient program, and who have been stabilized for two months or longer, from methadone to levomethadyl. Under present governmental regulations, this is feasible under IND 6590. I have been advised by Dr. E. Gardner of the Food and Drug Administration that notification that we are carrying out the same study at the Veterans Administration Hospital will be accepted by him, and such notification has been sent to him on March 29th. For your records, I am also enclosing a copy of the protocol under which the original studies were done; and copies of three reports which describe our experience. The first appeared in JAMA May 8, 1972; and the second is in press, in JAMA, and should appear within the next eight weeks; and a summary report for Current Psychiatric Therapies, which should appear within the next few months.

Stanley Zucker, M.D.

-2-

April 2nd, 1973

Supplies of L-alpha-acetylmethadol (LAAM) are available from the National Institute of Mental Health, and have already been deposited with our pharmacist.

I am sure you will also be pleased to know that the VA has established a collaborative committee and is organizing sixteen VA hospitals throughout the nation for the clinical examination of levomethadyl in opiate dependence. It is our wish that we will be included in this collaborative schema.

I trust that this information is sufficient to permit your committee to amend our previous submission for the clinical programs of cyclazocine and methadone. As we are ready to transfer patients now, I would appreciate notification of this amendment at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely yours,

Max Fink, M.D.
Professor of Psychiatry

MF/1j
Encs.