October 4, 1963

Mr. Alfons Drenk
Matthiaswiese 15
32 Hildesheim
West Germany

Dear Mr. Drenk,

I have only recently returned from a long trip abroad and regret the delay in replying to your letter of September 2. First of all let me express my sympathy on the death of [insert name].

The main issue in the three questions you posed for me is whether the presence of SV 40 virus in some of the lots of Salk vaccine prior to 1961 may be responsible for the subsequent development of malignant tumors in some of the inoculated persons. The fact that very large quantities of SV 40 virus inoculated into newborn hamsters have produced sarcomas predominantly at the site of inoculation after a period of many months cannot be the basis for assuming that the small amounts of SV 40 virus that had been found in some lots of Salk vaccine, or for that matter even large amounts of SV 40 virus, could produce tumors in human beings beyond the neonatal period. Even very large amounts of SV 40 virus do not produce tumors in older hamsters, and have failed to produce tumors in mice, guinea pigs, rabbits or susceptible monkeys. An excellent epidemiologic study entitled "An Evaluation of the Carcinogenicity of Simian Virus 40 in Man" by Joseph F. Fraumeni, Jr., Fred Ederer, and Robert W. Miller of the National Cancer Institute (U. S. Public Health Service) was published in the August 31, 1963, issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association (volume 185, pages 713-718). The results indicated no evidence that there was any increase in cancer mortality over a period of 4 years among children who received Salk vaccine of known content of SV 40 virus in 1955.
The rumors which were the unfortunate causes of death of some individuals have been occurring long before Salk vaccine had been used. When millions of persons receive a vaccine or anything else, it must be expected that all sorts of conditions will continue to occur among such people without reference to what they may have received.

With sympathy and best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Albert B. Sabin, M. D.
Distinguished Service Professor of Research Pediatrics

ABS:meh

Carbon Copy to:
Prof. Dr. Joppich