Dear Colleague,

Our Symposium being due to be held within three months, we have thought it would be interesting, in order to achieve more efficient work, to recall some of the principles which presided over its conception.

Numerous encephalitides are described under locally different names. In most cases, the descriptions and microphotographs published do not allow any of us to compare them adequately with our personal cases. Only a restricted number of these cases are accompanied by a virus identification.

We have thought of interest, in order to promote research on present encephalitides, to ask a number of experienced neuropathologists from different countries to produce a set of sections for general circulation from individual cases doubtful, atypical, or difficult from the point of view of differential diagnosis. Each member of the working team which such a Symposium must be will be able to examine them personally, with his own microscope, to take notes about them, compare them with his own, and attempt to decide which place they should occupy in the present classification of the Encephalitides.

A second identical set of sections will be displayed, with photographs, in premises adjacent to those where the Symposium will be held, in order that each member should have the opportunity of refreshing his memory.

We believe that the Symposium itself should amount to a short presentation of these cases by their author, who should stress the place which he assigns to his case (s), the lesions which have led him to such a diagnosis, the characters which he considers significant for differential diagnosis, and the general issues raised by the character of his case. In our mind, the most fruitful part of the Symposium must be the discussion of these case reports.

Languages are French, English and German. A few of us shall help to translate the opinions of the speakers if necessary, but this will be exceptional.

The organising Committee intends to schedule together those cases which are virologically akin or suspected on the grounds
of morphology of belonging to related affections.

Besides this aspect of mutual education by original microscopic preparations, the symposium could be concerned with the following theoretical issues:

Within the series of virologically identified cases can one recognize a histopathological pattern (topography, structural quality of the lesions) capable of affording a connection between them and of setting down definite morphological groups?

Is it possible to achieve such a grouping for the cases without any virological evidence? In other words, while the histopathological examination cannot provide a categorical etiological diagnosis, does it keep some value as presumptive evidence?

Is the presence of certain positive findings in a morphological description (for instance that of Cowdry type A inclusions suggestive of a viral etiology) sufficient in itself to classify a case or does one have to take into account as well the other characteristics of the attending pathological process?

Present-day electroencephalography has not yet paid much attention to the correlation between the data which it collects and the condition of the cerebral structures of man, condition whose reflection it collects. The study of records from cases which we have tentatively classified within certain nosological limits may be important, especially if we dispose of serial records. A session supervised by J. Radermecker will be reserved for the discussion of records which will be exhibited for all members to examine, on the days preceding Thursday, in premises adjacent to those where the Symposium will be held.

Electrophoretic study of biological fluids is being explored in all directions at the present time. We believe that there also it would be interesting to debate about the assets of this method, on the basis of cases which have been assigned a place, permanent or temporary, in a given classification. A session under the direction of A. Lowenthal will be devoted to these problems; it will be based upon biological data from cases presented on the days preceding Thursday.
This gathering of morphological, electrobiological and biochemical information will in our opinion provide some help for clinical neurology as well, since each presented case is to be accompanied by a short clinical record.

The working team of the Symposium will decide at the end of the meeting about the eventual collecting in one volume of the information made available. It might be possible to have each contribution published in the language chosen by the author, with sufficiently numerous illustrations to make the whole volume a worthwhile reference tool.

We insist that any members of the Symposium who have exhibits to display should send them without delay to Professor Dewulf, Institut St. Camille, Corbeek-Loo (Louvain), Belgique. They should enclose precise instructions specifying their desires as to the mode of display.

A certain number of neurologists, neuropathologists, biologists and electro-encephalographists have, according to their wish, been invited to attend the working sessions. Their taking part in the discussion is not excluded; it can be admitted provided that any intervention is kept strictly within the limits of those points brought up by members of the symposium, whose purpose has been precisely defined above.

We apologize for the length of this letter, but the importance of the problem as well as the new approach with which we intend to challenge it has made us feel justified to bring some precisions.

With best regards,
Yours sincerely,

Ludo van Bogaert M.D.