November 29, 1961

Dr. Joseph L. Melnick
Baylor University College of Medicine
Texas Medical Center
Houston 25, Texas

Dear Joe:

This is in answer to your letter of November 24, 1961 which was received on November 27.

(1) My letter to you of November 17 was the second protest I have registered regarding the presentation to others of an early draft, or an inadequately cleared report, of our Enteroviruses Committee. The first dealt with a report you apparently presented at a WHO meeting on viruses in Geneva. Dr. Andrews, as you know, wrote to me and to many others in criticism of this "far reaching proposal" of the American Committee, and he gave the contents of the report further distribution. I protested this to him with a copy to you, and pointed out that he was circulating data from a preliminary draft of an unapproved report to which I also had raised objections. The earlier draft has now been changed considerably and is, I believe, more nearly representative of the opinion of the Committee.

(2) Shortly after the premature presentation referred to above, the modified and extended report, not yet seen by approximately half of the Committee, was submitted for publication. This brought my second protest to you.

The "final" draft of the "Classification of Human Enteroviruses," which I received subsequent to the meeting of November 7 and read for the first time on November 13, differed substantially from drafts formerly submitted. It incorporated most of my previously recommended changes but also contained new data. There was no copy received by me prior to the meeting of November 7, so I was not prepared to ask any questions of you or others there. I left that meeting not realizing that there was a new draft or that there were any questions to be raised. This further explains my letter which followed when I learned that we were "in press."

I should like to say in passing, that I notified Dr. Harris well in advance of the November 7 date that I would be able to attend only a portion of the meeting because of teaching commitments.

(3) It is my understanding that, in general, a committee report should not be circulated (except to members), or that it should not be quoted or submitted for publication until all of its members are in agreement; or, failing this, that it be approved by the great majority of its members and any dissenting members be given an opportunity to (1) submit a minority statement, or (2) circulate proposed changes to all other members for consideration.
(4) Now that data have been furnished to me regarding the testing of 22 of 59 of the enteroviruses for stabilization with MgCl₂, I am in no way opposed to inclusion of such data. Do you consider it improper to request supporting data when a statement is made?

(5) I would like to recommend strongly that we should all decide to write like scientists and not like hopeful dreamers. Only those facts should be stated as "properties" which are firmly and unequivocally established. I therefore suggest the following modified wording:

Page 2: Definition. Enteroviruses are . . . . . . . . . . . . . They exist in multiple antigenic types, and all those so far examined have been found to have the following properties: (1) . . . . . . . . . .
(2) . . . . . . . (3) . . . . . . . . (4) . . . . . . . .

Until all have been tested for each and found similar we had better not make unfounded, categorical statements. I'm sorry I failed to pick this up before, but your last letter brought it to my attention when you mentioned RNA.

(6) With this one change I give my approval to publication, but I beg the Chairman to be less precipitous and less impatient in the future.

Very sincerely yours,

W. McD. Hammon, M.D.
Head of Department

cc: Dr. T. E. Boyd
Dr. G. Dalldorf
Dr. J. H. Enders
Dr. H. M. Gelfand
Dr. R. J. Ruebner
Dr. L. Rosen
Dr. A. E. Sabin
Dr. H. A. Wenner
Dr. M. M. Harris