January 16, 1968

Dr. Adrian Kantrowitz
Director of Surgical Services
Maimonides Hospital of Brooklyn
4802 Tenth Avenue
Brooklyn 19, New York

Dear Doctor Kantrowitz:

I have been as distressed at your recent attempts at heart transplant as I was favorably impressed by your careful publicity reports on your first cardiac boosters. Alas, your last two attempts just seem to be clearly trying to be first in this country and trying to make the press. Truly, I was deeply grieved that you tried a heart transplant on a baby with a tricuspid atresia because, of course, we really can help those babies for considerable periods of time by a shunt procedure. Their chance of survival of a shunt and having them grow a little older so that we are able to do something else, are far greater than a chance to be the first that survive cardiac transplant. I have also been distressed by your appeal to all the hospitals to try and notify you when a baby is born with anencephaly. As to your second patient, it was certainly unfortunate that you selected a donor who weighed only a hundred pounds to give a heart to a man who weighed one hundred and sixty pounds. Just to face it, that doesn't sound to anyone as if it had a good chance for success. It seems an absolutely essential thing that both donor and recipient are very carefully selected, very carefully matched, and that we strive to have success in the early cases, and that we don't take chances. Taking unnecessary chances and playing for the gallery is going to hurt the medical profession no end. Indeed, I feel so strongly about it that I feel that I shall have to write an editorial for Pediatrics or some journal that the pediatric profession reads, about the question of cardiac transplants in patients with congenital malformations of the heart. I regret to say that one of my very esteemed senior colleagues, when I was talking to him about it, said "you could certainly cite the two transplants done at the Maimonides Hospital as examples of what should not be done.

I regret to send you this letter but I believe it is only fair to you that you know what I think and how I feel about the present situation.

Sincerely yours,

Helen B. Taussig, M.D.
Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics

HBT:L