



The Australian National University

Director

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Professor J. Lederberg
Director
The Rockefeller University
1230 York Avenue
New York, New York, 10021
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Dear Professor Lederberg,

Although you do not know me, I am sure that you are aware of the existence of The John Curtin School of Medical Research and of the standard of the scientific work conducted within it. You may also be aware that I have become the Director of the School, the first to be appointed from "outside" the University in the more than 30 year history of the School. I am writing to you now to ask if you would be willing to assist a new Director in the task of leading the School into appropriate functions for the 1980's in the Australian context.

You may be aware that the whole medical research area in Australia has been and is still under close scrutiny. Questions are being asked about the appropriateness of the existing structure of our National Health and Medical Research Council (NH&MRC) for administering a research budget of over \$20 million in the 1980's. The Australian Science and Technology Council (ASTEC), the chief adviser to Government, has indicated that, in fact, the expenditure on medical research in Australia exceeds \$75 million and that some rational co-ordination of this through a much more professional and full-time Medical Research Council would be appropriate at this time.

You may also know that the 1978 Review of The John Curtin School of Medical Research (which has a research budget from the "education" vote of close to \$10 million within the country's \$75 million) recommended that the Director of the School needed to have the continuing advice of a senior, highly respected and authoritative, external Advisory Council to ensure the optimal use of the School's

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resources within the totality of Australian medical research commitment. I am strongly of the view that the School must have a national view of its medical research effort and that the JCSMR must be seen as a collaborating part of a total medical research consortium within the country. This concept has received some support from the Directors of other medical research institutes and from senior medical researchers in other Australian Universities.

I would now like to move to the setting up of a Director's Advisory Council for The John Curtin School of Medical Research. It is not at all clear to me whether the Council will need to meet, but one Foundation meeting within a year might be important. But I am certain that it would be most helpful for me to have advice by correspondence to have written comments on our Annual Reports that I can quote to Government, to receive views about new activities which need to be developed and to have international advocates speaking for the development of an overall Australian policy in relation to our total medical research endeavour. Although my primary concern is to bring the JCSMR into its appropriate place and function for medical research in the 1980's, I see this as having a wider significance for the whole of Australia. Being within the National University could attain real significance if the School could show some leadership within the total national endeavour.

✓ I am setting this matter out in this way because I would be honoured if you would agree to be named as a member of my Advisory Council and to assist us at this important time. I enclose a copy of our latest Annual Report (my first) in the hope that this will persuade you that the place is of excellent quality and deserves encouragement to develop a more prominent function within Australian medical science. I look forward to your acceptance of this important responsibility.

Yours,



R. Porter

encl.

orig. retained in office