



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
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NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE

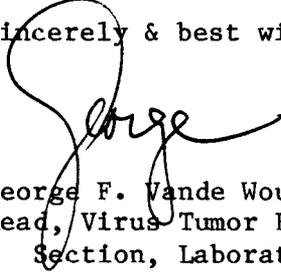
June 27, 1980

Harold E. Varmus
Department of Microbiology
University of California at
San Francisco
Parnassus Avenue and 3rd Avenue
San Francisco, California 94143

Dear Harold:

I agree fully with the proposed names for transforming genes. There is a need, however, for a name to describe "transforming" inserts in general. At present we have onc, src, aquired, specific, etc. The onc is perhaps most suitable since it was originally suggested with gag, pol and env. However it is less than mellifluous, is often pronounced like an abbreviation of my aunts' husband and has an absurd inference when one wishes to refer to the normal cell counterpart as in c-onc (pronounced conch). A c inversion of onc to con would be more suitable. I would like however, to propose mal (malignant) as an alternative. It has several obvious advantages, and when tested on a number of our colleagues, has had a very favorable response. If you agree I would be willing to circulate this letter.

Sincerely & best wishes,



George F. Vande Woude, Ph.D.
Head, Virus-Tumor Biochemistry
Section, Laboratory of Molecular
Virology

cc: John Coffin