

May 28, 1980

Douglas Gairdner, DM, FRCP
Rutherford Road
Cambridge CB2, 2NH
London, England

Dear Dr. Gairdner:

I have been informed by Dr. Marguerite Lederberg about your article in the September 29, 1979 issue of British Medical Journal entitled "The Rhesus Story". Dr. Lederberg (whose husband is the Nobelist Dr. Joshua Lederberg, President of Rockefeller University) read an abstract of your British Medical Journal article in the April 1980 issue of Psychiatric Capsule & Comment which is edited by Dr. S.J. Guze.

On page 709 of the British Medical Journal you state as follows: "so the matter rested until 1940 when Karl Landsteiner at the Rockefeller Institute, and A.S. Wiener working in a blood transfusion laboratory in Brooklyn, published a brief paper on "An agglutinable factor in human blood recognized by immune sera for rhesus blood." A copy of their 1940 paper is herewith enclosed which is to be compared with my 1939 paper (with Stetson). The Karl Landsteiner and A.S. Wiener 1940 paper gives no indication of the clinical importance of their finding. Kindly read my 1939 paper carefully and note the clinical implications and the reference to the transplacental passage of fetal RBC into the maternal circulation.

Even excellent geneticists such as my good friend Professor Bently Glass and Dr. Richard King fell into the same trap. Note however that Professor Glass has corrected the matter in the September issue of Quarterly Review of Biology.

May 28, 1980
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Page 2

Enclosed is a preprint of a paper entitled "Historical Perspectives Before 1945-Updated" to be included in a book to be published in a month or so. In Table 1 I listed papers dealing with isoimmunization in several species but it is not possible to include the 1940 Karl Landsteiner and A.S. Wiener paper which does not deal with isoimmunization but rather with heteroimmunization.

The fundamental basis for my associating isoimmunization with the pathogenesis of erythroblastosis fetalis was supplied by my 1939 paper. You may verify these facts with Dr. Pat Mollison or Drs. Race and Sanger whom I have known for many years.

I appreciate that you emphasize clinical aspects of the Rh story and the role of potent Rh antibodies in its preventions. It may interest you to know that I spent seven years (1925-1932) at the then Rockefeller Institute working with Dr. Landsteiner. It was during my close association with this Nobelist that I learned the meaning of research.

Best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

Philip Levine, M.D., F.R.C.P.

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