

MEDLARS tapes

February 15, 1966

Dr. Frank B. Rogers
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Dear Brad:

I have no actual record of having acknowledged your letter of December 15 and the useful bibliographic material that went along with it. In fact, none of the items had actual concrete information on seasonal cycles in twin births, but one or two of the articles had more general relationship to seasonality and were of interest to me. Meanwhile more analysis of somewhat larger files of the data that we had here indicated that the discrepancy that we believed to be present is probably not real. In fact there is a trap for the unwary in the statistical analysis, since the proper base for the comparison is the number of confinements rather than the number of children delivered, if any of the usual statistical tests are to be applied.

I have also, as you recommended, been in touch with Miss Darling at UCLA, but apparently they are still some way from being in actual production. May I impose on you again for another request which one of my colleagues has put to me with some urgency? This would be for any information whatever that could bear on the genetic variation in men or experimental animals that influences the metabolism of catecholamines. This would include such important compounds as adrenalin (epinephrine), noradrenalin (norepinephrine), and some compounds in the same genus, e.g., serotonin, which likewise undoubtedly have any number of synonyms.

While I am exhausting my credit I might as well lay another item on the table for you, that is, any work that ~~may~~ have been done in establishing a thesaurus of diagnostic descriptors specifically in the field of pediatrics. This would be intended for a guide book on terms to be used in a retrieval system on clinical records that some of my colleagues here are interested in.

Yours cordially,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

P.S. Since I talked to you I have had the opportunity and pleasure of getting on to the ~~SDC~~ time-sharing system at SDC in Santa Monica via a teletype link for which I have consoles now both at home and in my office. This is working out very well indeed and makes a marvelous anticipatory demonstration for our colleagues here to give them some glimpse of what the ACME facility will be able to do for them. This facility has made it possible in rather short order

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to implement the DENDRAL structural analyzer which I have attempted to summarize in the enclosed article. At the present time the program has learned a very modest amount of chemistry as well as topology, and does a reasonable job of extracting from a list such as Table 2 only the chemically most plausible constructions. While this is not my main interest in the system I believe that the notations may well be an effective way out of the morass of conventional chemical notation for structural search in organic chemistry.

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