



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

BETHESDA 14, MD.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH
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JUL 13 1961

Dear Mr. Fogarty:

In the absence of Dr. Daft who is out of town, I am pleased to answer your letter to him of July 6 regarding an inquiry from Congressman Yates, on behalf of a constituent, concerning juvenile diabetes.

You may wish to transmit to Congressman Yates some of the following for his use in reassuring Mrs. Strauss that much of what she would like to see done is, in fact, being actively carried out. It may be pointed out that there exists an integrated and well diversified program of Federal support of research in the field of diabetes which is centered in the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases. This program is similar to the programs of Federal subsidization of heart, cancer, and arthritis research. Under this program funds for research in diabetes are made available to qualified laboratory and clinical scientists in universities, medical centers, and research institutes throughout the United States. In addition, a substantial research effort in diabetes is undertaken directly by the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases in its laboratories and in the Clinical Center in Bethesda which it shares with other National Institutes whose respective interests are in the fields of cancer, heart disease and other major health problems.

In addition to supporting clinical and fundamental research related to diabetes, the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases also supports the training of qualified physicians in the special area of diabetes in an effort to enable promising scientists to take up research and teaching in this important field. It is not correct to assume that large appropriations for heart and cancer research severely handicap studies in the field of diabetes; all major diseases are under a concerted research attack supported by the National Institutes of Health and, in fact, many times the research advances in one area serve to throw badly needed light into another. Within this overall framework, the Congress has allocated gradually increasing funds for the fight on diabetes.

An important consideration, in addition to that of financing, is the extremely difficult subject matter -- diabetes -- itself. Tremendous progress has been made in this area during our lifetime. Before the discovery of insulin this disorder amounted to an automatic death sentence for diabetic children, and it condemned persons in whom it appeared later in life to a gradual but assured decline with much suffering and incapacitation. The discovery of insulin and the continuous improvements in insulin therapy which have been worked out over the years have basically changed this picture, permitting most patients a fairly normal, constructive life. A subsequent advance, the discovery of a variety of oral antidiabetic drugs, has liberated a substantial portion of diabetic patients from the unpleasant task of daily injections.

It has just recently been found that in certain cases oral drugs can be given to children to assist in their regulation by insulin. It appears that the use of today's oral drugs in children will not replace their need for insulin, but it should make their regulation easier. Devoted research workers are doing all in their power to find new avenues of control for diabetes so that there is much hope that future findings will lead to improved health of juvenile diabetics.

We certainly would suggest that this group of Chicago mothers of diabetic children contact the American Diabetes Association in its efforts to organize. It is true that in contrast to the major voluntary health agencies, the American Diabetes Association is primarily a professional society of diabetes specialists and does not engage in fund raising. Through its lay auxiliaries however, it does very worthwhile work in disseminating information and educating patients, and those who care for them, in the most effective current methods of diabetes control.

Mrs. Strauss' concern for the plight of the mothers of diabetic children certainly reflects credit on her. We hope that some of this information will serve to reassure her that the Congress is aware of the gravity of the problem of diabetes. Further, the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases which is vested with the responsibility for meeting this problem, and the many scientists and physicians supported by it in their investigations, are doing everything in their power to provide effective answers to it.

We hope that some of the foregoing will be helpful to you in replying to Congressman Yates. We will be happy to hear from you further if we can furnish you with any additional pertinent information or can otherwise be of assistance to you.

Sincerely yours,



G. Donald Whedon, M.D.

Acting Director

National Institute of Arthritis
and Metabolic Diseases

Hon. John E. Fogarty
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