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April 13, 1950

Dr. Chauncey D. Leake
The University of Texas-Medical Branch
Galveston, Texas

Dear Doctor Leake:

Thank you for the copy of your letter to Colonel McNinch concerning the Army Medical Library.

You will be interested to know that when I was in Washington last week I discussed this matter with Dr. Meiling and Colonel McNinch. From these discussions I gained the impression that no definite steps have yet been taken toward transferring the library from the Army to the Federal Security Agency other than exploration of the factors involved in the proposal. It is also my impression that the main basis for this proposal stems from the apparent duplicating (in the eyes of the Bureau of the Budget) recommendations of the Army and the Federal Security Agency each to build a medical library at the Bethesda site. Apparently, the Federal Security Agency had included in its budget considerable funds (about \$4,500,000.00) for a rather extensive working library for its Research Center at Bethesda. When the Army recommended the Bethesda site for the construction of the new building for the Army Medical Library the Bureau of the Budget took the position that this would mean duplicating facilities. It seemed reasonable to suggest that only one library be constructed to serve all agencies. Since the Army had already recommended for budgetary reasons that its library be transferred to the Army Civil Functions Appropriations, it was not a big step to consider its transfer to the Federal Security Agency. In fact, the Management Committee of the Department of Defense raised the question in August of 1949 and asked the Director of Medical Services (then Dr. Raymond Allen) to investigate the legal possibilities involved in the transfer of the Army Medical Library to some other governmental agency.

This is, of course, an obvious solution to the problem but to my mind not an entirely satisfactory one. For a number of reasons, which I am sure are fully appreciated by you and therefore need not be enumerated here, it would be highly desirable for the Army Medical Department to continue to operate the Library. While I would agree with the position taken by the Bureau of the Budget on the matter, which seems reasonable, that only one

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library should be constructed at the Bethesda site serving all agencies, I see no reason why it cannot be operated by the Army Medical Department. It seems to me that it is just as reasonable to suggest that the Federal Security Agency utilize the library operated by the Army Medical Department as to suggest the opposite arrangement. Certainly there is no reason to believe that the former agency can perform this function better than the latter. So far as the Budgetary reasons for its transfer are concerned this problem would be met by making the Library a Civil function. By this means its budget is separated from that of the Department of Defense and it would thus be freed from the cuts it might otherwise suffer.

This solution to the problem appears equally reasonable to the other proposal, i.e., the transfer of the Library to the Federal Security Agency, and, I believe, meets all the objectives sought. I have discussed this approach to the problem with Dr. Meiling who assured me that he would give the matter serious consideration. The only definite position which Dr. Meiling has taken in this matter, which he has expressed to Secretary Johnson, is that no matter what final decision is made concerning the construction and operation of a library, it should be perpetuated as a memorial to the medical military officers who had the foresight to develop and further the growth of the library. In this connection I should like to suggest that if the name of the library should ever be changed consideration be given to calling it the Billings Memorial Library

I should appreciate your comments on the matter. My best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

Michael E. DeBekey, M.D.

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CC: President Raymond Allen
Colonel J. H. McHinch
Dr. John F. Fulton
Dr. Lewis H. Weed
Dr. Richard Meiling

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