

C O P Y

October 23, 1952

Dr. Benjamin F. Sieve  
314 Commonwealth Ave.  
Boston 15, Mass.

Dear Dr. Sieve:

Until now I have been away from New York since the time your paper appeared in Science. For the most part, I have been in contact with various Planned Parenthood people in various cities and it has been interesting to note their reactions to the publicity about your findings. In the main their reaction has been one of amazement. They have asked "Can it possibly be true?". They have turned on me and asked if I know the author and whether his work is reliable. I then tell them of the pleasant relations we have had and of our struggle to make the data as meaningful as possible, and how you have laid your soul bare by publishing every possible detail.

Naturally I have thought of you many times and wondered how things must appear from your vantage point. I would suspect that you must in some ways have the feeling of standing terribly alone because of the inevitable skepticism and inasmuch as a considerable period of time is likely to elapse before a satisfactory recheck can be made by others.

There are several things I would like to ask about and if you could find the time I would appreciate comments on each of the following:

1. Your own feeling: Now that the dust has begun to settle somewhat I should like to know how the whole development appears to you. The statement in Time magazine was certainly scurrilous. I haven't any idea where this information was obtained, but it seems obvious that somebody in the professional group has acted in a very antagonistic manner. Although I may not have mentioned this background to you, I was aware of it. As you know, however, my attempt was to try to judge the validity of the scientific findings, irrespective of any other features.



2. The word "oral": Question has arisen in relation to the pledge to which you referred as to why the word "oral" was used. I am more than curious because as I remember the first draft, the word was not used there. The wording as you have it in the paper is as follows: "A pledge was obtained from each couple that only this oral method of fertility control would be employed." This wording is permissive of the interpretation that you were insuring only against utilization of other oral procedures being used. I would like to know whether the wording would have meant precisely what you intended to say if the word "oral" had not been included.
3. The third failure: I am curious to know why no mention was made of the third failure (the woman to whom I talked) when the expanded period of time and the enlarged number of couples were covered in the last draft of your manuscript.
4. Recheck in relation to lactation: While in conversation with Dr. Leo Szilard yesterday, he told me of your plan to review your records with respect to the period of protection which you reported which may have coincided with the nursing of babies. Both Dr. Szilard and I would be interested in knowing what progress has been made on this matter, and when further information may be available.
5. Possible couple interviews: In view of the fact that a period of at least two years is likely to elapse before your studies can be duplicated elsewhere, and in view of the fact that there is a desire to have this method utilized on a larger scale in foreign areas, depending upon the conviction that your observations are correct, question has been raised as to whether it would be desirable to have a small impartial medical committee interview your patients on a confidential basis to try to discover whether any of them may have "cheated" by using other contraceptive methods at the time they were taking your medication. It is likely that some expense would be involved if such a venture were undertaken but Planned Parenthood might be prevailed upon to provide any necessary funds. I would like in particular to have your reaction to this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Paul S. Henshaw  
Director of Research

PSH/pl



November 6, 1952

Dr. Nils von Hofsten  
Committee on Sterilization  
Uppsala University  
Uppsala, Sweden

Dear Dr. von Hofsten:

The purpose of this letter is to tell you of a new method of fertility control in human beings which has been partially developed in the United States and to seek your assistance in developing it further. We believe this new method may be of practical value for your country and that it may have real significance throughout the world.

Your name was given to me by our National Director, Mr. William Vogt, who states that you are the person best able to express the interest of your country in fertility control matters.

The method we have in mind is use of the anti folic acid agent, Aminopterin, for termination of pregnancy in the very early stages. This approach has been developed and used by Dr. John B. Thiersch, Associate Professor of Pathology, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, in cases of therapeutic abortion (see enclosed reprint). Dr. Thiersch's studies have dealt with pregnancies in the second and third month, but, based in part on animal experiments, there is reason to believe that administration of Aminopterin in small doses regularly, at the time of expected menstrual periods, or at the time of any missed menstrual period, would have a satisfactory birth control effect — and, best of all, would offer a means of correcting birth control failures. Because of the almost universal need for suitable birth control procedures, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America is most anxious to have this new method adequately tested. Arrangements for such tests could easily be made in the United States except for possible legal restrictions. Since Aminopterin appears to exert its effects after fertilization has occurred there is the possibility that a study employing this procedure for birth control purposes



might come in conflict with abortion laws in the United States, and it is our desire not to risk such a conflict here.

Because of the great importance of the problem of family limitation and because of the possibility that a successful abortifacient might be of value in Sweden, we should like to know whether you might be willing to arrange for a study to be undertaken in your country. If so, I am confident that sufficient Aminopterin can be obtained free of charge from a United States pharmaceutical company. Also, it would be possible for me to come to Sweden for a short period, perhaps during December, to assist with preliminary arrangements, and it is likely that Dr. Thiersch could come at a later time to serve as a technical consultant if needed.

Because there is a strong desire to employ the Aminopterin procedure in overcrowded areas if found satisfactory, we are anxious to have adequate tests performed at an early date. Also, because of the superior quality of health, medical and scientific work done in Sweden, and because legal restrictions may not be a problem there, we would be most happy if work would be undertaken by a group which you might designate.

While tests with human beings might go forward in your country, it would be our hope that animal tests could be carried on in the United States to screen various compounds closely related to Aminopterin for effectiveness. Thus, if the procedure outlined can be shown to be successful in human beings with Aminopterin and more suitable compounds are found at the same time, rapid advances should be made.

In case you would be interested in a development along the lines outlined here, I would be glad to forward a more detailed proposal and to come to Sweden, perhaps about the middle of December, to assist in making arrangements for the development.

Sincerely yours,

Paul S. Henshaw  
Director of Research

PSE/pl  
encl.

cc: Mr. Reiner  
Dr. Brown  
Dr. Szilard



November 6, 1952

Mr. Jonas Reiner  
1010 Fifth Avenue  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Jonas:

Our Aminopterin plans have advanced to the point where the technical procedures have been checked by Dr. Thiersch and a letter of inquiry has gone forward to a Dr. Nils von Hofsten in Sweden (copy enclosed).

Assuming that Dr. von Hofsten will be interested, question now arises as to how the necessary travel should be financed. If I remember the previous conversations correctly, you will be glad to make available \$1,000 for this purpose. If this is correct, I should like to have confirmation in writing in order that we may proceed with certainty.

If this arrangement is what you have had in mind, may we leave the matter like this. When and if a favorable reply is obtained from Sweden, I will transmit the information to you at which time we can make arrangements to cover the cost. Actually, all that will be necessary will be for you to transfer such funds as you may care to contribute together with a letter indicating what they are to be used to cover expenses in connection with a test of the effectiveness of Aminopterin for fertility control purposes to be carried out in Sweden.

Beginning Saturday this week I will be away from New York for the rest of November. However, my secretary will forward any mail immediately.

With kindest regards to you and Mrs. Reiner,

Sincerely yours,

Paul S. Henshaw  
Director of Research

PSH/pl  
Encl.