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To: Participants in the Clinical Research Oral History Conference
From: Judith P. Swazey and Renée C. Fox
Date: February 26, 1991
Re: Conference Agenda and Discussion Questions

We thought that by this time you would appreciate having an agenda for our forthcoming conference. So we have not only prepared a conference schedule and a list of the topics around which the meeting will be structured but also clusters of questions intended to start you thinking about the kinds of phenomena, developments, and issues that we hope to discuss at the sessions.

As you know, through this conference we hope to generate a documented account of a particularly creative and productive era in clinical research that occurred in the United States, roughly from the period after World War II to the early 1960s. That account will include an exploration of the interconnections forged during this period between American and European clinical investigators, research teams, and institutions that were the chief loci and sources of training and support for their work.

We have used the shorthand term "clinical research" throughout the materials that we have prepared for you. It refers to the particular kind of medical research to which this conference is devoted; namely, what Edward D. Ahrens has termed "patient-oriented clinical research," and Francis D. Moore calls "the study of the sick."

The conference is primarily concerned with the florescence of clinical research in what has been called the "golden years" during the decade-plus after World War II, and the factors that contributed to it. But we also want to discuss how this type of clinical research has developed and changed and, many believe, waned in more recent years, and the future implications of those changes for the development of medical scientific knowledge and medical education, and for the care of the sick. One of the questions we will explore with you is what periods or phases you would distinguish in clinical research, and on what bases. Toward the end of the conference we will deal more explicitly with these matters in the context of the session that deals with characteristics of today's and tomorrow's clinical research.

The format of this conference is quite different from that of conventional professional meetings, and it varies, too, from the way that materials are usually gathered by oral historians or field researchers. Rather than conducting extensive individual interviews, we decided it would be more interesting and illuminating to have a long "collective conversation" in a setting where key figures in the development and conduct of clinical research can compare their experiences, views, and perspectives in a face-to-face, interactive way.

CLINICAL RESEARCH ORAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

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