



March 7, 1988

Assistant Surgeon General James O. Mason, M.D., Dr.P.H.
Director
Department of Health & Human Services
Public Health Service
Centers for Disease Control
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Dr. Mason:

Harry Gibbons asked that I write to you because of his faith in your sense of justice and honesty, a fact that he pointed out is also evident in the book, "And the Band Played On."

First, please understand that I am indebted to Dr. Kaiser and the CDC for their guidance, support, and interest in my work on malariatherapy for cancer. It was a factor in obtaining the acceptance of our research work by the dedicated, highly qualified Mexican physicians and government officials, enabling us to carry out strictly controlled patient treatment at the Instituto Nacional de Cancerologia in Mexico City. Nothing that I say is to diminish my gratitude for and admiration of Dr. Kaiser and the CDC.

The project was public knowledge in Cincinnati. When a Cleveland Plain Dealer reporter, who works from Cincinnati, called to interview me, I felt it was better to permit the interview than to avoid it. His story was distorted and sensationalized. Two quotations concern me:

George Blatt, director of the health fraud unit in FDA's drug evaluation and research center, said Mexico was more lenient than the United States "in what they allow in the practice of medicine."

"Most of what we call quack clinics are not prohibited in Mexico," Blatt added. "They are permitted to operate there."

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Dr. Robert L. Kaiser, of the federal Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, said Heimlich approached the agency in 1986 about getting some malaria for cancer research. He said the government agreed to supply the parasites, but nothing came of the project. Kaiser said he did not think Heimlich could find a U.S. hospital willing to undertake the risk of "malariatherapy."

Kaiser said the CDC had not endorsed Heimlich's work. "We're not experts in cancer; we know about malaria. He asked us a lot of questions, we gave him a lot of answers. We sort of explored and said he could look to animal models."

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CDC ID: D 41812
DATE: MAR 08 1988
Correspondence Unit, OD
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The Cleveland Plain Dealer reporter's slanted questions and selected answers are apparent. The Cincinnati Post story that subsequently followed is honest by contrast. I am sorry that Dr. Kaiser was put on the spot and had to answer questions spontaneously. But, as you know from the enclosed correspondence, the understanding was that the CDC offered to assist in obtaining vivax malaria for cancer patients.

I have only one concern. The above quotations were disseminated to Mexico by the UPI and caused severe resentment against the Mexican physicians and officials of the Ministry of Health because Mexican research was denigrated by an FDA official. Secondly, the reference to animal models (rather than patient treatment), which is inaccurate, raised the false implication of Americans experimenting on Mexican nationals. As a result, the reputation and status of dedicated, sincere Mexican physicians and officials, have been jeopardized.

Dr. Mason, I ask only what might be done to overcome the prejudicial statements of the FDA spokesperson and the inadvertent reference to animals expressed by Dr. Kaiser, obviously taken out of context, if indeed the quote is correct. It is urgent that action be taken to make amends to the individuals at the Mexican Ministry of Health and the Instituto Nacional de Cancerologia, who have been unjustly adversely affected.

Respectfully,



Henry J. Heimlich, M.D.

HJH/nc

copy to: Dr. Harry Gibbons