

REMARKS OF HONORABLE JOHN E. FOGARTY, M. C. 2ND DISTRICT OF
RHODE ISLAND AT THE WORLD CONGRESS OF GASTROENTEROLOGY IN THE
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The Role of the United States Government

In Research and Training in Gastroenterology

Mr. Chairman and Members of the World Congress of Gastroenterology:

I appreciate this privilege and opportunity to address you on what the United States Government does and can do to assist in the very important field of research and training in gastroenterology.

Our government has a broad and continuing interest in all aspects of medical research. This interest is manifest by its support of several agencies and departments which conduct medical research and administer funds which support independent investigations in the country's many medical schools, universities, and other research and teaching centers. The Congress of the United States exerts great effort to see that adequate

funds are appropriated each year to further these research and training programs. With adequate attention always directed to research in fundamental areas, particular emphasis is also placed on fields of greatest human need and on areas of greatest promise for advancement of medical knowledge.

It is natural, therefore, for the Government to have an active interest in gastroenterological research and in training for such specialized research. Government support of work in gastroenterology is provided chiefly through the Public Health Service's National Institutes of Health. Interest in this field is centered primarily in the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases.

Although grants for research in intestinal diseases have been awarded for some time as part of a program of general studies in internal medicine, only during the past two years has a special effort been launched to stimulate research in this field and to train greater numbers of competent teachers and investigators. This recent effort on the part of the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases has been reflected in an increase in the number of applications for grants from scientists and physicians who want to study clinical and basic problems in gastroenterology. During 1957 the amount of money devoted to such support equaled the total for the five previous years. During the current year, available funds for research grants have been doubled over the 1957 level and there has been a substantial increase in funds for training grants. And I am happy to report

that the appropriations committee I chair in the House of Representatives has recommended that support of research and research training be further increased during the next fiscal year.

Responsible in no small measure for this increased activity is the fact that, two years ago, there came before our committee an outstanding physician who, most convincingly, apprised us of the fact that gastroenterology was being neglected, relatively speaking, in the government's programs of medical research and training, and that additional support should be provided. That physician was Dr. Clifford J. Barborka, President of the American Gastroenterological Association. He has done much to keep me, and the subcommittee of which I am chairman, fully advised of the needs and requirements in this area, and I can assure you that my committee and I will urge that the Congress continue to give increasing

support to worthwhile projects and programs in this area.

Of particular concern, according to the testimony I have heard, are such disorders as peptic ulcer, ulcerative colitis, and regional ileitis. These are diseases which afflict thousands of our citizens and, in many cases, result in prolonged, expensive hospitalization, in loss of income, and in numerous related social and emotional problems. I am impressed with the fact that, although these diseases may affect persons of any age, they often strike those in the younger and middle-aged groups during their most vigorous and productive periods of life.

In the attack on these tremendously important disease problems, we in Congress have noted with great interest the diverse and ingenious approaches which are being brought to bear. For example, understanding of the mechanism of pain in peptic ulcer and of other aspects of

intestinal function should be aided considerably by the development of a device for taking motion pictures of continuous fluoroscopic images of the stomach and intestine.

One of the principal advantages of this technique, I am told, is that the fluoroscopy may be carried out at such low levels of X-ray intensity that pictures can be taken for as long as 20 minutes without danger of radiation hazard to the patient.

Another unusual technical device of which we have recently been informed is the radiotelemetering capsule which the patient under study swallows and which transmits for permanent recording the internal wires or tubes. We have heard also of plans for clinical studies to evaluate the nutritional effects of the surgical treatment of peptic ulcer, to study relationships between the adrenal glands and peptic ulcer, and to determine the site and mechanism of disturbances in

intestinal absorption, in ileitis, in ulcerative colitis, and in idiopathic sprue.

While we all eagerly await the results of these projects, the Government, in its support of research, is fully aware that investigations cannot be concerned only or even chiefly with studies bearing directly on improved diagnosis, treatment and management of patients with diseases of the intestines and related organs. We realize that for the ultimate conquest of these disorders, more detailed information must be obtained concerning the fundamental biochemical and physiological processes of the gastrointestinal tract and of its associated organs. With better understanding of these basic processes, it is not unreasonable to expect that scientists will eventually be able to determine how these processes are deranged in various diseases, and that clues will be gathered as to

how these derangements can be prevented or rectified. Accordingly, projects are being supported which seek to determine precisely the nature of the various intestinal juices, to describe in biophysical terms the delicate gastric and intestinal linings which are eroded in peptic ulcer, and to inquire more specifically than previously into mechanisms of intestinal absorption of the various nutrients essential for the vital processes of life.

The greatest need, however, it seems to me, in our efforts to deal successfully with these serious diseases, is for greater numbers of competent and dedicated investigators. Thus, we are placing an increasing emphasis on training. By the award of training grants from the National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases, programs are being progressively established in the medical centers and medical schools

of this country whereby young physicians are being trained in the clinical procedures of gastrointestinal diagnosis and treatment. They also are being trained in the techniques of research which can be turned upon these diseases. We expect that the young investigators being produced by these training grant programs will be ready in a few years to undertake additional research studies in this field and will then each year further increase our yield of effective and valuable research information in gastroenterology.

It is important to remember, however, that this progress will not come about solely through the appropriation by the Congress of more and more public funds. The most vital force for progress in gastroenterology is an increasing awareness by the medical profession itself of the importance of problems in this field.

The role of the U. S. Congress in this endeavor is clear. In the past, whenever the Congress has been fully informed of the important needs in any disease area and of the manner in which these needs will be most effectively met, it has reacted with interest and support. It is reacting and will continue to react with interest in, and support for, gastroenterology. But the primary responsibility is with the medical profession to stimulate interest, to come forward with good research ideas, and to organize effective programs for the training of more investigators.

In these remarks, I have limited my comments to the research endeavors in this country and to the role therein of the Federal Government.

But, as we all know, scientific research knows no national barriers. We are willing and eager to exchange with other countries not only knowledge and ideas -- as

is being done at this most important meeting -- but also personnel. Modest beginnings in this latter direction are already under way.

This World Congress on Gastroenterology represents a splendid effort to bring together the best minds and the best experience in this field from all over the globe, and the results stemming from it should prove to be of great benefit to all of us. I am greatly pleased and honored to have the opportunity to welcome you here to share with us your research experience and to make plans for even more effective progress in the future. Not only in gastroenterology, however, but in all areas of medical research and investigations, we need and will surely achieve broader understanding and more fruitful collaboration among scientists and physicians of all countries.

We in the Government of the United States look forward confidently to closer and more effective relationships with all nations in medical research.