

*Return to Dr. Penfield*

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May 23rd, 1942

Dr. E.B. Convery,  
Medical Director,  
Department of Pensions and National Health,  
379 Common Street,  
Montreal.

Dear Dr. Convery:

You will remember, perhaps, that we discussed at our meeting the other day the difficulty of our accommodating all of the patients from the services at the Montreal Neurological Institute who are being referred to us. The condition has become quite acute and we have patients in the halls as well as the wards and have run well over our planned allowance.

Various suggestions have been made. The first suggestion was that we should enclose one of our porches which would give seven additional beds, if crowded, and the construction of which would come to about \$4,000.00. However, this would not be a satisfactory arrangement; it would lose the porch for us, which is needed, and would not meet the difficulty of the situation.

From the point of view of general policy we would rather not expand the Neurological Institute. It serves as a self limited unit now. Nevertheless, during the period of the war and for a few years after the war, I believe that our facilities might be of great use to the services. The suggestion might be made that certain members of our staff might go out to St. Anne's Hospital. However, they could not be effective unless they were able to build up there a whole unit with the rather complicated mechanisms which this Institute houses. This would be expensive and not really satisfactory. For example, if you were to put in x-ray equipment like ours at St. Anne's it would be of little use unless our specialized x-ray man, Dr. Arthur Childe, came out to make the interpretation. You might set up a neurosurgical operating room at St. Anne's, but it would fall short without the electroencephalographic set up and the neuropathological laboratory.

Letter to Dr. Convery:

It seems to me that there is only one feasible suggestion and that is that a building of light construction should be built on the land belonging to McGill University adjacent to the Neurological Institute. It would be necessary for me to gain permission from the University, of course. The building should be of a size sufficient to accommodate 30 beds and with the rooms properly attached to a ward, which would make the unit self contained. This building could be devoted to patients under the Department of Pensions and National Health and would have to be supported by them. Those patients could then use our x-ray, electroencephalographic, operative and other services, provided that an adjustment was made so that we would not incur a deficit because of this addition. If this were done, it would be possible to run patients who were admitted for diagnostic study or for operation through quickly and to transfer them at the earliest possible moment to St. Anne's hospital.

In case this arrangement was made, the immediate care of the patients, if neurological, should be under a neurologist who is constantly active in the Neurological Institute, and I would suggest that the Director of the M.N.I. might be allowed to rotate this appointment. In neurosurgery, the patients should be under one of the neurosurgeons who also is active in the Neurological Institute. The control of these patients would be a matter for discussion. We have in the past, however, found that it worked well for each of the neurosurgeons to specialize on certain types of case, and this might make it possible for each of the three neurosurgeons at present at the Neurological Institute to do a certain amount of work there. It might be possible for us to detail a junior member of the neurosurgical staff to supervise after care and possibly to help with the pre-selection of cases at St. Anne's. However, because of the difficulty of securing the services of young medical officers and because of the large number going into service, we might have to ask for an additional medical officer or two who might be seconded here to work on the service and to receive special training during six month periods.

I have set down various aspects of this problem in order that the undertaking may come up for discussion. If action is to be taken, it should be immediate.

Yours very sincerely,

WGP/AD