

# THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

49 WEST 49th STREET, NEW YORK

THE MEDICAL SCIENCES  
ALAN GREGG, M.D., DIRECTOR

October 30, 1934

CABLE ADDRESS:  
ROCKFOUND, NEW YORK

Dear Penfield:

I have read your article, which I am returning herewith, on Princeton and Medicine, with a good deal of interest. I should like to talk the matter over with you since the written word is sometimes too heavy and perhaps too easily capable of being misinterpreted.

On the rather more serious side, I believe that pre-clinical years are better done near the clinical years and this in spite of the relative success of Oxford and Cambridge. It is clear, however, that <sup>superior</sup> pre-medical work is extremely desirable and that the level of performance as yet in North America leaves much to be desired.

I don't believe that the illustration of Oxford and Cambridge is as convincing as I should like to have it in order to undertake the task you discuss and for the general reason that the test of an institution or a system is not how well does it do when provided with excellent men, but how well does it survive the the presence of relatively inferior men. The quality of men going to Oxford and Cambridge would explain a good deal of the quality of work done there.

Would not Princeton make a more distinctive contribution if it were to develop certain subjects (now considered pre-clinical) in and for <sup>solves</sup> them rather than as the handmaids of medicine, and not to attempt to have either a medical school or part of a medical school

Doctor Wilder Penfield

October 30, 1934

2

simply <sup>to</sup> imitate the peculiar conditions of Oxford and Cambridge as institutions or systems of education?

Now turning to the rather more trivial comments on your article how much would you care if you were not a Princeton graduate? (I have often felt the need for some punctuation mark to indicate a wink - perhaps an \* would do). You list as arguments in favor of medical department at Princeton the success of Princeton men as doctors. Should not you list the failures since if one can become so good a doctor after going to Princeton, is there any reason for changing the magnificent product of the present system? You say these men got their education without Princeton's help - I might counter that precisely because my father did not help me at certain stages in growing up, that I also got an excellent education in just those periods. You also say Princeton is teaching biology well - would you not have a better argument for putting a medical school at Princeton if you could prove that it was teaching it poorly? Has Princeton really refused to develop medicine and if so has it been a declination in principle or for the lack of wherewithal?

And in any case I want to make it clear that I am glad you have sent me the article. I would like to continue the debate when next I see you, which I should like to be soon.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Gregg.

Doctor Wilder Penfield  
Neurological Clinic  
McGill University  
Montreal, Canada  
AG:GER