



Memorandum

Date July 2, 1986

From Director, NIGMS

Subject Sequencing the Human Genome

To Director, NIH

The members of the committee to assess the role of NIH in the proposed project to sequence the human genome met for the first time on June 27. In addition to the members you appointed (namely, Drs. Rall, Raub, Moskowitz, and DeVita), I asked Dr. Lindberg to join the committee, since managing the data derived from this project will be crucial. I would also note that, in Dr. Rall's absence, Dr. Chen attended the meeting and presented the views that Dr. Rall had expressed to him on this subject.

Since the appointment of the committee, the attached article appeared in the June 27 issue of Science (Attachment A). It and the material sent to me by Dr. Charles DeLisi of the Department of Energy (sent to you previously in preparation for the meeting with Dr. Norman Anderson) formed the basis for the committee's discussion.

At this first meeting, the committee came to a number of conclusions and made some preliminary recommendations:

First and foremost, while it is clear that the Department of Energy has taken, and will continue to have, the lead role in this endeavor, the NIH must and should play an important part. With this in mind, it was agreed that NIH should establish contact with the Department of Energy at two levels. To this end, it was recommended that the attached letter (Attachment B) should be sent from you to Dr. Alvin Trivelpiece, indicating the interest of NIH and its desire to learn more about and collaborate in the DOE project. A second letter will go to Dr. DeLisi from me, thanking him for providing material to us and inviting him to meet with the committee and brief us on the DOE plans.

Above and beyond this preliminary step, it was felt that the debate started at Cold Spring Harbor and reported in the Science article should be extended in order to determine how the international scientific community truly views this project. The committee recommends that this be done through a series of meetings of the NIH Director's Advisory Committee (DAC), the first of which should take place in October prior to the final issuance of the President's appropriation request for FY 1988. It would seem appropriate for Dr. DeLisi and his colleagues, representatives from Europe and Japan, along with a number of NIH-supported experts such as Renato Dulbecco (whose original article in the March 7 issue of Science is Attachment C) to present their views to the DAC. Dr. Moskowitz indicated at the committee meeting that he thought this could be arranged and that, if you agreed, he would use the committee as the planning group for the DAC meeting.

Finally, the committee discussed the need for appropriate support for GenBank® in order to handle the massive amount of data which will accumulate from the human genome sequencing project. It was suggested that, after the meeting to be held by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute on July 23, and the first of the series of DAC meetings, a further presentation should be made to the BID Directors regarding the status of the project on sequencing the human genome and the need to provide stable support for GenBank®.

Summary of Preliminary Recommendations from the Committee:

1. The letter to Dr. Alvin Trivelpiece (Attachment B) should be signed and sent by you.
2. A letter to Dr. Charles DeLisi setting up a meeting with the committee should be sent from me.
3. A series of DAC meetings on this subject should be held, starting in October 1986.
4. Stable support for GenBank® should be discussed further with the BID Directors.

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Ruth E. Kirschstein, M.D.

Attachments