

DOCUMENT SOURCE Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory Archives and Records Office <i>R. & D. Administrative Files</i> <i>Life Sciences Division</i>	
Records Series Title	
Accession No.	<i>434-90-02116</i>
File Code No.	<i>116-5-39</i>
Carton No.	<i>(2)</i>
Folder No.	<i>Donner Found. Grants</i>
Notes	<i>1954-63</i>
Found By	<i>Karen Holmes</i>
Date:	



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April 27, 1955

Mr. Robert Donner
Barclay Hotel
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Dear Bob:

Your secretary wrote that you will be in Philadelphia for a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Foundation and would like a report on the progress of our work with patients with metastatic carcinoma of the breast.

The program has been a very active one. To date, twelve women have been either irradiated or are receiving pituitary irradiation. These are all advanced cases of metastatic carcinoma of the breast who have had bilateral oophorectomies and adrenalectomies. These initial cases have been desperate ones with extremely poor prognoses and life expectancies. We believed it desirable to select cases upon whom all conventional methods of therapy had been tried and had failed because pituitary irradiation with the cyclotron could not as yet be considered a method of treatment. As a result the selection of cases had to be done with extreme care and necessarily the patients were in very poor condition at the time of coming here. This meant that some of the prospective patients died before receiving pituitary irradiation, but, after having been completely evaluated. These of course we have not counted in the above total. One died the day before she was to receive pituitary irradiation, another died the week before, and the third went insane as a result of metastatic lesions to the brain. In addition a large number of patients were seen but not judged suitable candidates. You can probably see that the selection of patients is a very difficult one but that it was essential that we start on this seriously ill group. Of the twelve persons who have been treated so far, four have died. One of these died during the course of irradiation and the other three died from two to four months after receiving pituitary irradiation in August, 1954. We believe that we are now approaching the point where we can take less desperate cases who have a better chance of survival and hence will be of more value to the program.

Donner, Robert

In addition to the selection of new patients and the irradiation of those who are hospitalized in the Donner Pavilion, we are engaged in a continuing follow-up on the surviving patients who have already received pituitary irradiation. Evaluation of benefits to these individuals from the standpoint of clinical improvement will require close

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follow-up for a long period of time, but it can already be said that there is substantial laboratory evidence of pituitary depression. Our work with laboratory animals shows us that we cannot expect immediate improvement and that pituitary effects are delayed for a period of from six months to a year. It, therefore, is essential that our patients be selected so that they will have that life expectancy and also that a close and continuing follow-up be maintained.

On the patients thus far irradiated, dosage schedules at different levels of irradiation are being tried in order to find the optimal schedule as well as the optimal total amount. Three patients have received between 13,000 and 14,000 rep, one has received 16,000 rep, three patients have received between 17,000 and 18,000 rep, one patient has received 20,000 rep, and two have received from 21,000 to 22,000 rep. We expect that we can give gradually higher doses on subsequent patients so that we will be in a fit position to determine optimal dosage schedules and amounts. We have thus far been very conservative and it may prove that we will have to reach higher levels of irradiation before we can expect the results which we hope to achieve. Our hospitalization records at the Donner Pavilion show that we have had an average census since October 1st of 4.1 bed patients per day who have spent a total of 858 patient days in Donner Pavilion. You can therefore see the great activity going on in this program and the necessity for sufficient time interval to elapse before we can expect to achieve clinical improvement. Our animal work and the clinical laboratory changes on the human patients being irradiated convinces us that our progress is satisfactory and that we may hope to achieve beneficial results in the treatment of advanced carcinoma of the breast with metastatic lesions.

Looking forward to seeing you soon,

Very sincerely,

John H. Lawrence, M.D.

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