

June 22, 1971

Professor Brian MacMahon
665 Huntington Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02115

Dear Prof. MacMahon:

During my Sabattical year in Europe I have renewed my acquaintance with Daniel Schwartz at INSERM in Paris, and greatly enjoyed our exchanges.

As one of the probably limited number of Anglo-Saxons who has read and appreciated his recent book, "Clinical Trials", I would like to pursue with him the possibility of its being translated and published in English.

It has occurred to me that you might be willing to bring this idea to the attention of your publisher, Little, Brown, and Company.

I am convinced that the high caliber of the analysis, the clear presentation of the different goals of trials, and the very perceptive considerations of the ethical aspects of trials--brought forward by Prof. Schwartz--represent a unique and original contribution to the subject. I think these attributes and this thinking should be brought to the attention of readers in our language.

On the other hand, I recognize the relatively small audience involved and the greater cost and complexity of such publications in our country. I have enclosed a brief flyer-type synopsis of the book and would appreciate your comment and reply if you are willing to pursue this matter further with Little, Brown and others.

I will keep your comments in confidence if you so desire.

I enclose a recent documentation of the concept of Multifactor Trials which might interest you.

Cordially,

Henry Blackburn, M.D.
Visiting Professor

Dictated from Geneva
Institut de Medecine
Sociale et Preventive
12 rue de Candolle
1205 Geneva
SWITZERLAND

Therapeutic Trials in Man

Daniel Schwartz--University of Paris

The author is a distinguished French Polytechnician, epidemiologist and statistician, with long and extensive experience in the epidemiology of cancer, chronic cardiorespiratory disease, diabetes, and neonatal problems. He heads the principal epidemiological research group of France. His new book on therapeutic trials in man represents this experience well. It is unique and perceptive in problems of trials which the Anglo-Saxon research community has probably appreciated but perhaps has inadequately weighed, the goals of trials, their interpretation, and their ethics.

The book is not solely working manual but in the words of the author is rather meant as an instrument of reflection and an object for discussion. It is not primarily a repetition of tested methods or a proposal for future directions in trials. Rather it is a personal evaluation of today's construction of the clinical trial--as a concept and as a method of research and preventive medicine.

The work ponders over past results which gave "truths" which were unusable. It separates trials into those which are principally explanatory, i.e. concerned with causes, and those which are primarily pragmatic or concerned with results more than with mechanisms. It considers the problems of conducting and continuing sequential trials, in which decisions are based either on the collective ethic, as are most Anglo-Saxon trials, or the individual ethic in which the "best" treatment is given new cases according to updated trends in the study data. The work even asks the reader

to consider whether controlled clinical trials are the best way to answer questions, if their design is based on compromise between the goals of research for new knowledge and those of application.

The author himself asks whether it would be best to present such concepts in a series of essays rather than in textbook form. He decides finally, to attempt a state-of-the-art construction, useful as a manual to the student and as a stimulus to further thought among the experts. The concepts, design and methods of therapeutic trials are so interdependent that this decision was probably a wise one. At any rate, the book merits the attention of serious students of epidemiology and preventive medicine. Its translation is fortunately in the hands of a young and competent bilingual epidemiologist, of the London School, working in Prof. Schwartz department.