

August 2, 1976

Honorable Walter F. Mondale
Senator from Minnesota
443 Old Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Mondale:

I have from time to time, both on and off of University stationery, sent you my commentary on medical and social issues. I would like to continue to do so, despite the fact that you will very soon, I am confident, no longer be representing just this constituency but a much larger one.

I suspect that in your long-standing concern about medical ethics and policy you and your staff have read the 1973 Report by the Artificial Heart Assessment Panel of the National Heart and Lung Institute. It is quite unique in its attempt to develop an "environmental impact statement" on a developing medical technology. It falls far short of its goals but is nonetheless useful.

A concern I would like to express is not whether a totally implantable artificial heart should be developed (I happen to believe it should not) but rather a concern about two issues: 1) the almost total duplication of effort between identical Artificial Heart programs in the Atomic Energy Commission and the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, each costing something on the order of 10 million annually, and 2) the relative priorities of the government's efforts. Four or five times more is spent on this "technologist toy" --- which could have a huge impact on medical costs, and none whatever on the real course and frequency of the disease it palliates --- than on, for example, the National High Blood Pressure Control Program which could vastly reduce premature disability.

Sincerely yours,

Henry Blackburn, M.D.
Professor and Director

HB:jp

bpc: Lee Stauffer