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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

DEC 12 1991

Dr. Maxine Singer
Director
Carnegie Institute
1530 P Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005-1910

Dear Dr. Singer:

Thank you for your October 30 letter regarding the involvement of women in research. This touches on an issue of particular interest to me. We find that about 41% of our new research training appointments are filled by women. Apparently many women drop out of research before they reach the stage of independence as an investigator because women comprise only 19% of the principal investigators on research project grants. As you suggest, I believe we need to improve retention of women by developing mechanisms to permit adaptation to child care and elder care responsibilities that are disproportionately borne by women.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has been exploring several options for addressing these issues within the National Research Service Awards Programs. One option includes providing for paid parental leave which would be available to new mothers and fathers. The second option would permit part-time training in instances of disability or pressing family circumstances which could include child care or elder care. In the case of part-time training, the service payback obligation would be incurred on a pro-rated basis.

Both of these options have been developed by the Training Advisory Committee and are expected to address some of the problems women experience while preparing for a career in research. Both options are being evaluated by the NIH Legal Advisor for compliance with existing statutes and the need for regulatory modification.

I appreciate hearing from you and Dr. Sidney Altman on this important matter. Should you have any additional questions, please contact Dr. Walter Schaffer, NIH Research Training and Research Resources Officer at (301) 496-9743.

A similar letter is being sent to Dr. Altman.

Sincerely yours,

Bernadine Healy, M.D.
Director