

Duke University Medical Center

DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH SCIENCES
PHYSICIANS ASSISTANT PROGRAM

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Mr. Harry Reasoner and
Mr. Mike Wallace
c/o 60 Minutes
CBS News Department
New York, New York

M.L.
11/11/69

Dear Sirs:

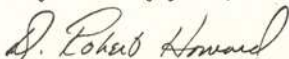
In today's world there is an increasing clamor regarding society's commitment to the people. Among the most ardent cries is the emphasis being placed on health services as a right of human decency and dignity. As the demands for health services are rapidly increasing, the capacity to service these needs has diminished noticeably. Little contest confronts the notion that national health insurance will be well established by the end of the next decade, but the question of how total health care can be provided remains largely unresolved.

Recent emphasis by the Nixon administration to provide realistic and effective health careers for the returning medical corpsmen from Vietnam provides a substantial manpower resource, but the question remains just how these people can best be utilized to meet the needs.

Here at Duke University, a program to train physician's assistants was inaugurated in 1965. This new category of health workers is trained to assume many of the tasks heretofore in the sole realm of physician responsibility. Since 1965, the program has grown from three students to fifty-five students, a growth which has been far surpassed by the demand for their services. Evaluations to date reveal that the variety of roles assumed by the university trained physician's assistant can extensively augment physician services in a way very acceptable to patients, physicians, and other members of the health team. The demand for services by this innovative manpower concept has been reflected in the subsequent development of similar programs at five other universities and the planning and development for such programs at a majority of the medical centers around the country.

Although there is no single effort that can solve the physician manpower crisis, there is no solution that does not include the physician's assistant. A visit by 60 Minutes might well be the best means of introducing the people to medicine of the 1970's and simultaneously letting their views play a creative role in the development of the services which they will ultimately utilize.

Very sincerely yours,



D. Robert Howard, M.D., Director
Physician's Assistant Program