

Lima, September 29, 1961.

Dr. Robert B. Watson,  
The Rockefeller Foundation,  
Caixa Postal 49,  
Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.

Dear Dr. Watson:

Your letter of September 12 and your recent cable to Dr. Honorio Delgado have been quite stimulating and encouraging to all of us in these critical and painful moments. We also feel that the action of the University has been a crime against medical education and progress in Perú. As you say, the quality of medical care is based essentially on the quality of medical education. But we have the most determined intention to keep on struggling for a first class education. It seems that at the present time the only hope of maintaining standards and discipline is the establishment of private institutions of higher education. As you know we have already obtained official authorization from the Government for the functioning of a University of Medical and Biological Sciences, so there are no legal or political difficulties for our endeavor. We realize that there are many and great difficulties ahead of us, but the task is not impossible and we have to do it. I am confident of the ultimate success.

In this relation we are waiting anxiously for the decision of the Foundations on our request for a temporary assistance in keeping the full time personnel in Lima and working with us. This is an extremely important aspect in our plans. Personnel can not be purchased, and they represent a most valuable asset, and the consequence of many years of work.

I like to request your assistance in relation to the possibility of continuing our research work. As you know, as a member of the Institute of Andean Biology, I have a grant from the NIH, to support high altitude investigations concerning the processes of aging. The work is to be carried out by the group of men who for a long time collaborate with me, all adequately trained. As a result of the University situation we all (but one: Dr. Tulio Velásquez) have resigned from the Institute, and it has already been decided to continue our work in a new Institution (Instituto de Investigaciones de la Altura), within the new University. I have just visited the NIH and talked to Dr. Shannon and other executives, requesting a change in the Grant. I was informed that in the early part of October, Dr. Martin M. Cummings and Dr. Ernest M. Allen, from the NIH, will visit Lima to discuss all the matters related to our's and others grants in operation. I talked to them in Bethesda, and they mentioned to me that they will visit you, in Rio de Janeiro, before coming to Lima.

It is in this connection, which I like to request your kind assistance.

You are well informed of the many years of sacrifice, work and efforts which have been necessary to place our high altitude research in a respectable position within medical and scientific circles. To me, and in general to all of us, this represents the whole professional life and we have in it a most deep spiritual feeling. We cannot lose this successful effort, at a time in which we have the personnel, a scientific recognition and the possibilities of doing further and important work. It would be a real tragedy if this happens, and the end of a life work.

What I have requested, and will request to Drs Cummings and Allen, is to recommend the transfer of the grant to our new Institute. We may have some immediate difficulties in space and, mostly, equipment. The people who have destroyed our Faculty are also trying to annihilate our research. They are taking away all equipment donated by Foundations. I am trying to keep what it was given by the School of Aviation Medicine, USAF, during the nine years of contract we had with them, but I have not received yet a definite answer about their decision. However, whatever situation develops about availability of equipment, I feel that a relatively small increase of the grant will gradually solve the problem.

In regards to space, the situation is not bad. We may lose some but still we have facilities in Hospital buildings and laboratories which do not have anything to do with the University.

There is no institution, like the Rockefeller Foundation, more familiar with our development and scientific efforts. If you consider pertinent, kindly explain to Drs. Cummings and Allen what it means to us the possibility of going on with our research. It does not concern the assistance to one man; it relates to the efforts of a group of men. I sincerely feel that if my work has been at least partially fruitful, this is not in relation with the research in itself, that is the modest information given to the medical literature. Its value, if any, has been the development and the assembly of a large group of young men, well trained and with high ideals. I am at the end of my career, but I will feel very guilty if I don't do all I can so they are able to continue in their contribution to medical science in Perú. This situation is a temporary one. I am certain of better days ahead of us.

With most cordial regards to you and Dr. Berga.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Alberto Hurtado

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