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Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, New York, NY 10032-3784
Division of Genetics / PH 12W
(212) 305-6731

September 29, 1995

Dor Yeshorim
Committee for Prevention of
Jewish Genetic Diseases
160 Wilson Street, I-B
Brooklyn, NY 11211

Dear Sirs:

Let me congratulate you on your efforts in the prevention of Jewish genetic diseases. I strongly endorse your efforts to screen young men and women in the Jewish community for Canavan disease.

Canavan disease is a progressive hereditary neurologic disease with tragic consequences. The affected infant begins to show symptoms at about 2-3 months of age. These symptoms include inability to support the head, seizures and spasticity. The head gets abnormally large as the infant's condition gets worse. Early death has been reported in some cases but survival beyond 10 years of age is not uncommon. In many ways Canavan disease is like Tay-Sachs disease.

As a clinical geneticist, I have seen the devastating effects of these disorders on Jewish infants. Some of the families I have personally taken care of are in the Orthodox community.

The DNA test for Canavan disease is a simple but accurate test. I strongly urge testing of all the young men and women in the Orthodox community for Canavan disease. I also strongly support screening for Tay-Sachs, Cystic fibrosis and Fanconi anemia as well.

Sincerely,

Kayeboa, MD

Kwame Anyane-Yeboa, M.D.
Associate Professor of
Clinical Pediatrics
Director, Division of Genetics

KAY/da