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February 28, 2000

Clark W. Heath, Jr., M.D.
Chair, Awards Committee
American College of Epidemiology
4101 Lake Boone Trail, Suite 201
Raleigh, NC 27607

Dear Clark:

Last year I nominated Dr. Mervyn Susser for the Abraham Lilienfeld award. I was delighted that he was selected for the award, not only because I nominated him, but because I think that the Lilienfeld Award was created with people like Dr. Susser in mind. Indeed, if Abe Lilienfeld were able to select the awardees, he might well have chosen Dr. Susser for the award.

This year I would like to nominate another of the giants of our field, Dr. H. A. Tyroler. Al Tyroler began his epidemiology career with no formal training in epidemiology. Indeed, he was a physician practicing in the mountains of North Carolina, when his astute observations and insight into the health problems of his patients and a collaboration with John Cassel led to their groundbreaking studies of cardiovascular disease and cultural change. John Cassel brought Dr. Tyroler to his new Department of Epidemiology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Public Health, where together they attracted a strong and creative faculty who laid the foundations for social epidemiology. Moreover, Dr. Tyroler went on to become almost a legend in the field of cardiovascular epidemiology and has also made major contributions in occupational epidemiology and the epidemiology of health care, as well as in teaching and service to the nation and the world.

Since those early studies (published in 1961 and 1964), Dr. Tyroler has published over 270 articles during a span of nearly 40 years. His coauthors have been both students and other leading epidemiologists. He has worked in almost every aspect of cardiovascular disease epidemiology, broadly defined, and his articles have frequently helped to define new questions, just as his first articles did.

Dr. Tyroler's accomplishments have been widely recognized. He has been a member of the Institute of Medicine for two decades, delivered the Wade Hampton Frost Lecture in 1985, received the John Snow award in 1988, received a Distinguished Achievement Award from the American Heart Association in 1996, and delivered its Ancel Keys Lecture in 1996. In conferring the Lilienfeld Award on Dr. Tyroler, we put ourselves in excellent company!

The record of Dr. Tyroler's service to the field could be that of an entire department. He has served on committees, task forces, governing bodies, collaborating committees, and policy and data monitoring boards for the leading cardiovascular trials along with many other major studies, and for international collaborations with Poland, Germany, Israel, and the USSR.

Dr. Tyroler has also been a dedicated and gifted teacher throughout his career. He has been a major contributor to the careers of a substantial fraction of the world's cardiovascular epidemiologists and many other epidemiologists as well. I have attended lectures he has given to beginning public health students and to experienced epidemiologists. He is a master at explaining concepts, putting findings into context, and explaining background and significance. When he gave a guest lecture on Goldberger's classic investigations of pellagra in my introductory epidemiology course, the entire class, myself included, sat rapt with interest as he recounted the evolution of Goldberger's thinking and the steps that he took.

Throughout his remarkable career as an international epidemiologic superstar, Al Tyroler has retained a genuine humility about himself and his accomplishments. He is generous in sharing credit and in giving praise. He listens to a novice as attentively as to an expert. And his strong and abiding concern for social justice has been an ever-present theme in his research, his teaching, and his mentorship.

There are many distinguished epidemiologists who would appropriately be recognized with the Abraham Lilienfeld Award, and indeed I look forward to the opportunity to nominate others in the future. But without question this year's awardee should be Al Tyroler. When we have thus taken him into the College, we can then consider creating a Herman A. Tyroler Award!

Yours sincerely,

[Signed, Victor J. Schoenbach]

Victor J. Schoenbach, Ph.D.
Associate Professor