Letters to the Editor...

The following letter is a copy of one addressed primarily to American Diabetes Association, Inc., New York City.

Gentlemen:

The diabetic identification card, shown on page 21 of *Forecast* for May-June, 1956, is pretty, but for some very real purposes, is not worth the thin dime it costs to obtain. I am speaking from the standpoint of a physician of 40 years experience who, for more than that many years, has been familiar with police problems and who has, for a bit more than 4 years, been mildly diabetic.

In the first place, there are many similar diabetic identification cards in circulation none of which, including the card mentioned, can be expected to have any standing with law enforcement officers. In Los Angeles, and undoubtedly throughout the country, many "winos" and other chronic alcoholics who are *not* diabetic carry such diabetic identification cards and use them to try to talk the officer out of arresting them. For this reason, I know of no place where such cards are given consideration by police. The police cannot take to a physician every drunk who waves a diabetic identification card at them.

We cannot reasonably expect this situation to be improved as long as such cards are so easily obtained. To broadcast these cards in this manner reduces them to about the same value as a lead nickel. If perfect copies of the badges worn by the police of New York City were as easily obtainable as diabetic identification cards, no one would be able to distinguish between the real and the false and a person flashing a New York Police badge would have less authority than a Hottentot waving a spear.

Several years ago I wrote to Dr. Joslin and proposed the following system of diabetic identification cards. Dr. Joslin replied that he thought the idea was excellent and that he was referring my letter to the A.D.A. It was evidently ignored.

1. Have some nationwide organization, such as the A.M.A. and its component societies, handle registration of diabetics and issue registered diabetic identification cards.

2. Have one standard registered diabetic identification card, *all* such cards to be *serially numbered* and, preferably, to carry a small photograph of the person to whom issued.

3. Have these cards issued *only* by centrally located units, such as the County or State Medical Societies, which shall keep a register by names and serial numbers of the cards and the persons to whom issued.

4. Provide standardized application forms to be filled out by the diabetic's personal physician, certifying to the fact that the person is diabetic, and requesting that a registered diabetic identification card be issued.

5. Registered diabetic cards to be issued *only* on the basis of certification as outlined above.

6. For purposes of permanency have diabetic identification cards mounted between plastic.

7. Establish a fee for such cards to cover cost of the cards and administration of the program, with provisions for free issuance to indigents.

Only by such a program can a diabetic identification card be expected to be respected by law enforcement personnel. Until such a program is established *do not* blame the police for the diabetic who erroneously lands in the drunk tank instead of the hospital.

Very truly yours,

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