



Saint Francis Hospital of Evanston

355 Ridge Avenue, Evanston, Illinois 60202 · 492-4000

November 1, 1967

Karel B. Absolom, M.D., M.S., Phd.
Department of Surgery and Surgical
Research
St. Anthony's Hospital
Amarillo, Texas

Dear Doctor Absolom:

It is with great interest that I read your article in the October 1967 number of SURGERY. Dr. Wangenstein has always intrigued me as a person. Being an outsider to his teaching, his clinics and conferences, I know about him only through his writings. I have read practically page to page his book on "Intestinal Obstruction", and I have quite a few reprints of his articles published in different journals.

I am actually greatly disheartened to state that Dr. Wangenstein has been a man of hurried conclusions. To cite a few, his "Gastric Freezing", "Ultra Radical Mastectomy", "Second Look in Operations of the Colon", "Vagotomy in Ulcerative Colitis", etcetera, etcetera, have all produced temporary ripples in the intellectual world of surgical science. His contribution on post-operative nasal gastric suction is something that has stood the test of time.

You certainly appraise him as a great teacher in the science of surgery. Certainly, I am not in a position to discuss that, but having worked with two of his trained surgeons for more than a year, I think that I wouldn't be very proud of him as a "teacher of surgery." Your classification of him with Hunter and Billroth looks to me like the overstatement of the century. Fortunately, almost every teaching hospital in this country has its Wangensteens, but, fortunately, we don't put them in the same class as Hunter and Billroth.

Your article would have been very fit in the "Minnesota Daily", or the monthly publications of the Department of Surgery of the University of Minnesota, but certainly it looks quite out of place in a journal like SURGERY. Politics in surgery and medicine has created havoc rather than improvement. To me, your article seems to be highly, emotionally strung, and coated with "politics". Certainly, there are other nice ways of saying how great Wangenstein was without comparing him with Hunter and Billroth.

Good luck for the next time.

Sincerely,

A. P. Hovnanian, M.D.
Director of Surgical Research
and Surgical Education