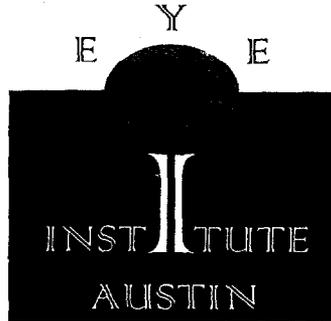


Robert L. Rock, M.D.
H. Grady Rylander, M.D.
George C. Thorne, M.D.
Gary R. Rylander, M.D.



Janet A. Lindsey, M.D.
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December 17, 1999

Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305)
Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane, Rm. 1061
Rockville, MD 20852

Re: Docket No. 97N-484S

Dear Sir or Madame:

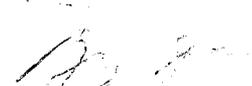
I have been a corneal surgeon in the state of Texas for eighteen year and am distressed to hear that the Eye Bank Association of America (EBAA) will be adding a series of questions regarding Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) to medical screening standards for all donor corneas. This requirement will significantly affect the number of tissues currently being obtained by legislative consent.

Texas and the US have greatly benefited by having available these young, healthy donor corneas recovered through the cooperative efforts of medical examiners. Medical examiner laws have been instrumental in helping to eliminate the waiting lists of patients in need of sight restoring corneal transplantation; and, has successfully and safely provided donor corneal tissues (in Texas) since 1977. This important legislation provides 50 - 60 % of the donor corneal tissues for our community.

I appreciate the position EBAA has taken to develop and maintain strict medical standards and screening devices to help ensure a safe supply of donor corneal tissues. However, with the annual incidence of CJD at one case per million population (with most cases being present in patients 60 years of age or older) and the calculated risk of a prion-infected corneal donor at .005%, imposing these screening steps which will terminate this important law is unnecessary.

I ask that you please reconsider your position on this important matter.

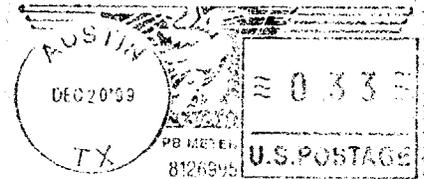
Sincerely,


George C. Thorne, M.D.

97N 484S

C351

EYE INSTITUTE OF AUSTIN, P.A.
5011 BURNET ROAD
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