

January 6, 1968

Hon. Eugene E. Holt  
Commissioner  
Department of Public Works  
Municipal Building  
New York, New York 10007

Dear Commissioner Holt:

Thank you for visiting our hospital several weeks ago with Commissioner Terenzio and Borough President Sutton and presenting us with the excellent model of the sculpture that will go over the entrance of the new building at Harlem Hospital Center.

Upon examining this model of the sculpture I was struck by the fact that the Caduceus shows two snakes entwined on the staff. The two snake motif is open to question and I am enclosing photostats of two American Medical Association Journal articles that give rise to the question as to whether a single snake should be used or the double snake. You will note in the photostat from the American Medical Association, dated August 14, 1967, that paragraph two states that the single serpent entwined around the staff was adopted by the House of Delegates of the American Medical Association in 1910 and that the World Health Organization has adopted a similar design in 1948. The article then says "references to the Caduceus as a symbol of medicine are erroneous. Caduceus is a Latin adaptation from the Greek for the herald's wand which was carried by their god and messenger, Hermes. His Roman counterpart was Mercury (and I understand Mercury was commonly regarded as the god of thieves)". The article continues with the statement "the symbol eventually developed into a staff entwined with two snakes."

I bring this to your attention only because it is certain that someone within the community will observe this — providing it is not the right insignia. It appears to me, at this point, that the single snake might be the appropriate emblem to use. However, I am not an authority and I present this information to you for further investigation.

Sincerely yours,

*Vernon Spencer*  
VERNON SPENCER  
Assistant Commissioner (Hospitals) and  
Executive Director, Harlem Hospital Center

VS:cd

cc: Com. Terenzio  
Com. Derson  
Dr. Maloney  
Mr. Rhoden ✓