

Editorial

On Certain Conventions

A word of explanation concerning the spelling of the name of this JOURNAL seems in order, inasmuch as a few journals have for some years insisted that the proper spelling of the word is "lipide." The decision was not lightly made. Considerable research and discussion preceded the final choice. Anyone interested in a historical account of the origin of the terminal *e* is referred to a column by Dr. A. M. Patterson in *Chemical and Engineering News* 30: 1910, 1952. The principal argument in favor of the *e* was that of maintaining consistency with the spelling of such chemical terms as sulfide, oxide, glyceride, amide, and so forth. We feel that this argument is really irrelevant, as the word lipid does not stand for a specific chemical structure. Arguments in favor of the shorter form include the fact that the second *i* is almost always pronounced short, not long, as it should be with a terminal *e*. It is also a fact that most journals, both in this country and abroad, use "lipid."

Another choice, and one far more arbitrary, faced the editors in selecting a name, and an abbreviation, for those fatty acids in the blood which are not bound in covalent linkage and which have come much into vogue in recent years as "unesterified fatty acids"

(UFA), "nonesterified fatty acids" (NEFA), "free fatty acids" (FFA), and even "albumin-bound fatty acids" (ABFA). Reasons for avoiding "unesterified fatty acids" and "nonesterified fatty acids" include the fact that the fatty acids of sphingomyelin also are not in ester linkage. In addition, UFA can be confused with "unsaturated fatty acid," and NEFA with "nonessential fatty acid." "Albumin-bound fatty acids" is not strictly correct as some of these fatty acids are apparently bound to lipoprotein. "Free fatty acids" was finally adopted in full knowledge of the fact that they are not "free" in the sense of being nonprotein bound (although a very small percentage is—depending on the dissociation constants of the complexes formed by the individual acids and proteins), but they are free in the sense of "not bound by covalent linkages." Similar usage exists, for example, in the term "free cholesterol." Furthermore, "free fatty acids" corresponds with the chemical concept of "titratable acidity readily extractable from a slightly acid medium by a nonpolar solvent." Finally one school of thought holds that abbreviations should not be pronounceable. Certainly no one can pronounce FFA.

J. H. BRAGDON
Associate Editor

National Heart Institute
Bethesda 14, Maryland