

Harry Keen recalls the UGDP trial of oral hypoglycemics vs. diet and insulin from the 1960s.

April 1, 2005

Dear, Henry:

Your mention of UGDP releases yet another reminiscent wave. We had shown that our group of 250 newly diagnosed, glucose intolerant, Bedford citizens, randomized to tolbutamide had significantly ($p < 0.05$) fewer CV events over five years than the placebo group, using a mixture of Rose Questionnaire Positive, new Minnesota Codable 1.1s, 1.2s, and 7.1s, clinical events and deaths attributed to cardiovascular cause. As you may imagine, we suddenly became the darlings of Upjohn whose stock had nose-dived after UGDP findings had leaked to the *Wall Street Journal* around May, 1970.

Happily, in Stockholm, one Doctor Paasikivi, had got similar findings from a randomized study at the Serafimer and Steve Fajans, who was ADA President, invited us both to that unforgettable St. Louis meeting.

How it all came out you will know. Though we didn't exactly save the day for the sulphonylureas, we certainly made a difference, especially in Europe. But it took 'till 2000 before UKPDS was able to dispel the fear of oral anti-diabetic agents which that extraordinary UGDP result provoked.

I shall never understand how the very atypical behavior of the UGDP placebo group failed to raise more discussion. Of 21 deaths in middle-age Type 2 diabetics in that placebo group, not one died a coronary death. In fact, their cardiovascular mortality experience was better than that for the general population of the U.S. at that time!

Enough history for one evening, all the best,

Harry

I wrote a cover letter and forwarded Keen's letter to Curtis Meinert at the John Hopkins Center for Clinical Trials. It was never answered. Curt had covered everything in the remarkable first edition of his book: *Clinical Trials. Design, Conduct, and Analysis* 1986. New York Oxford. Oxford University Press.

April 25, 2005

Dear Curt:

I am unaware of much of the follow-up after UGDP, or what has happened to sulphonylureas over time. But in talking with Harry Keen about other issues recently, he sent me the attached historical note. Would you respond and put it in context? And would you please reminisce about the St. Louis meeting? I will not send your reply to Harry unless you ok it.

Best, Henry Blackburn