

January 18, 1971

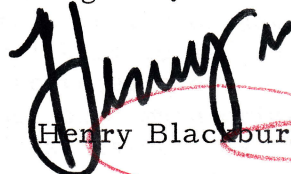
Dr. Keys
Dr. Burchell
Dr. Stamler

Dear Friend:

The enclosed is for your private information. Obviously, I had no misunderstanding at all. It was clear that the Keys article was not seen by a competent CIRCULATION reviewer, and I knew that Dr. Friedberg had rejected it out of hand; this is his "perfect right," I simply didn't want him to continue this dangerous practice, with epidemiological materials, and I may or may not have influenced him to be more cautious in the future.

I, of course, am dropping the matter, though I continue to be disturbed by the reasons he gives here for rejection.

Regards,


Henry Blackburn, M.D.

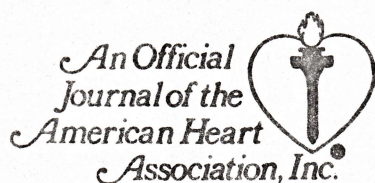
HB/rs

Dictated from Geneva

P. S. to Dr. Keys; You might look at the summary once again and consider emphasizing the "clinical" points of importance I listed in my letter, in hopes it might be more digestible in another clinical journal.

File

Circulation



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December 29, 1970

Henry W. Blackburn, Jr., M.D.
Institut de Medecine Sociale
12 Rue de Candolle
1205 Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Henry:

Following your persuasive letter of November 29th, I decided to reread your manuscript on "Mortality and Incidence of Coronary Heart Disease in Twenty Years Among Minnesota Business and Professional Men" with the thought that I would accept it if possible, despite my original decision not to do so. However, a rereading persuaded me not to do so.

You have written me not only regarding this particular manuscript but in the context of general editorial policy. I will reply in the same vein, since I think you have some misunderstandings. I need hardly tell you that the review of manuscripts in epidemiology are likely to afford the greatest difficulty. I have already discovered that. It would be a mistake to think that acceptance of a manuscript for publication in CIRCULATION is determined exclusively by the decision of the reviewer. I would fail in my duty as Editor if this were so. The reviewers are a great help and in many respects can mold my opinion. This applies particularly where there are gross defects in methodology or where the material is presented in an area with which I may not be familiar and which, according to the reviewers, involves no new work. But the final decision is based on many factors which I regard as important for the policy of the journal in its relation to its contributors and its readers. The long list of positives which you make regarding the manuscript are outweighed in my mind by the implications in the final statement that you make on Page 21. The population group which you are reporting is indeed small, and the whole problem of "risk-factors" is simply getting to be less important than the decision as to whether or not dietary changes can influence the serious complications of coronary disease or, better still, prevent the development of serious atherosclerosis.

From this point of view, it makes any report of "risk-factors" less important than it would have been some years ago. There is no criticism of the methodology and of the factors which you report. That they may be somewhat different from what has previously been reported does not necessarily mean that they are of sufficient importance to justify publication in CIRCULATION in competition with other manuscripts which are submitted. This is really the basis of my decision, and the decision is mine, not that of the reviewers. I will of course use the reviewers to the best of my ability and I need not tell you how marvelous they have been. But other factors which are the basis of my general policy for the journal may be the dominant factor in my decision.

I did not refer to another matter which is also important but not the primary reason for my decision. This refers to the statistical methods used, which are very difficult for most readers to follow and sufficiently technical to make me question their publication in a journal such as CIRCULATION which is designed for clinicians. This is to indicate to you that I do not question the value of the paper, but that it may be much more appropriate for a journal more directly concerned with epidemiology and its statistical methods.

I hope you will continue to send manuscripts to me and I will do the best to judge each one as fairly as I can.

With warm regards, I am sincerely yours,

Charles K. Friedberg

Charles K. Friedberg, M.D.
Editor, CIRCULATION

CKF:drs