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TWIN CITIES

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CORRESPONDENCE

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Dr. R.K. Anderson
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Dear RK:

I'm really sorry not to reply in detail to the student's question about George Mann's article. It contains more misinformation and miscomprehension than any other editorial ever published on the subject. It was (admittedly) an error on the part of the New England Journal editors, falling between the cracks with the change in editors from Ingelfinger to Relman. Dr. Mann is not competent to evaluate epidemiological data and misrepresents them throughout. Most of the distortions of this editorial were well taken care of in the subsequent issues of the New England Journal of Medicine under correspondence and the student should be referred to those excellent remarks. Unfortunately the damage was done by giving such a prestigious platform to such a vicious and uninformed proponent.

Of something like 23 clear and obvious errors, the one that most closely affected me was his misinterpretation of my own work. He makes an erroneous reference (52) when he really refers to an article that I wrote on the frequency of electrocardiographic findings in active and inactive railway workers and this is illustrated in table 8, which are prevalence rates. He does not understand the difference between cross sectional prevalence data and incidence. There are obviously many reasons why coronary victims might be concentrated among the sedentary occupations in a cross sectional study. He simply doesn't know the difference and misrepresented, misinterpreted and misquoted our studies.

May I suggest that you counsel the student to thumb through the several following issues which contain letters to the editor with effective criticisms. In the following year, 1978, there was a rather weak reply by a few members of the American Heart Association Nutrition Committee which summarized many of the arguments which he misconstrued.

The article would make a very useful exercise in the summer course or in any course on errors and distortions. I guess such exercises are better confined to actual reports of original research than to rantings of the leading paid consultant of the American Egg Board and Livestock and Meat Institute.