



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

December 21, 1965

Heart Disease Epidemiology Study
25 Evergreen Street
Framingham, Massachusetts

Refer to:

Ralph Rossen, M.D.
L. E. Phillips Psychobiological Research
737 East 22nd Street
Minneapolis 4, Minnesota

Dear Ralph:

Happy to learn that your visit with us was in some measure profitable. I look forward to receiving your published material and the program for the annual symposium.

The data you have alluded to is mostly published, and I assume you have some reprints from us. If not, we will be glad to send you some.

The number of sudden deaths without fresh ^{occlusion} infarction is widely and consistently noted to be about one in three. Our views on cigarette smoking are published in an editorial in the Annals of Internal Medicine. Heavy cigarette smokers were noted to have five times as many sudden deaths as non-smokers. The risk for all manifestations of coronary heart disease was not cumulative as indicated by the fact that while it was related to the number of cigarettes smoked each day, it was unrelated to the duration of the cigarette smoking habit. Also, ex-smokers reverted promptly to the non-smokers low risk. The excess risk associated with cigarette smoking was independent of every demonstrated factor risk examined.

The cigarette smoking habit is unrelated to the underlying atherosclerotic process and the extent of uncomplicated atherosclerosis noted at postmortem does not differ from that of the general population. In those predisposed by a compromised coronary circulation, the cigarette smoking habit can be quite ominous with an appalling excess risk of lethal coronary disease. The evil effects appear to be the result of the autonomic stimulation produced by nicotine. The smoker is, in effect, giving himself 20 "shots" of adrenaline a day.

We have found that about 55% of all "heart attack" deaths are sudden and unexpected. In about 48 hours approximately 80% of all deaths occur. Those who survive three weeks are virtually guaranteed surviving the acute attack. Within five years one-third of the "heart attacks" recur and 50% of the recurrences are fatal.]

I trust this answers your questions. Happy holidays!

Sincerely,

W.B.

W. B. Kannel, M.D.
Associate Director

WBK:8 mach