

October 30, 1974

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Dear George:

For quite awhile I've carried around two issues of the NEJM and finally, between San Diego and New Orleans recently I enjoyed your review on obesity. You obviously enjoyed doing it. I would like very much to have a reprint if you're not already out of them.

Of your many useful syntheses, the criticism of Hirsch's thesis I found specially important. Their idea is based of course, on quite weak and insufficient data.

It was good to point out the problems in relating overweight, hypertension and coronary disease. Despite the fact that our former mentor here has insisted on the lack of an independent contribution of overweight or obesity to coronary risk, I agree with you that a clinical trial of weight reduction is needed. However, I predict that such a trial, along with physical conditioning, will never be done, in our time, with the goal of primary prevention --- because of difficulty and cost. Meanwhile, I think that the association, probably causal, between calorie excess and elevated blood pressure, is sufficient to be positive rather than negative about the preventive potential of weight reduction and better yet obesity prevention.

You surely have noted in the Seven Countries Study, but did not specifically consider in your review, the role of habitual physical activity in the question of population obesity, as contrasted to the individual problem in which the higher the calorie intake of a population, the thinner the population. At least this holds for rural groups.

Regards,

Henry Blackburn, M.D.

HB:jp  
enclosures

NEJM Editorial  
Controversy ✓  
Progress ✓  
Amsterdam ✓

Figures XVII.15 and 16 (pgs 182-3) of Seven Countries Study