

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY  
THE MEDICAL SCHOOL  
303 E. CHICAGO AVE.  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60611

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY HEALTH  
AND PREVENTIVE MEDICINE  
312-649-7914

JEREMIAH STAMLER, M.D.  
PROFESSOR AND CHAIRMAN  
DINGMAN PROFESSOR OF CARDIOLOGY

September 23, 1977

Arnold S. Relman, M.D.  
Editor  
The New England Journal of Medicine  
10 Shattuck Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02115

Dear Dr. Relman:

This letter -- not for publication -- is prompted by the paper in the latest NEJM by George V. Mann, "Medical Intelligence -- Current Concepts -- Diet-Heart: End of an Era". It is to convey to you my considered judgment that this paper is so fraught with errors of fact, distorted interpretations of fact and omissions of fact as not to constitute "Medical Intelligence" or a reasonable scientific review of, "The facts of the diet-heart puzzle..." Under the circumstances, it does not merit appearance under a heading, "Medical Intelligence"; at best, it should have appeared under a title of the type, "Medical Viewpoint".

Dr. Mann is of course entitled to his viewpoint on this matter, and to promulgate it, and the NEJM editors of course have the prerogative to publish as they see fit. At the same time, it is appropriate to note that the issues involved in the estimate of the scientific facts about the so-called diet-heart question are not simply esoteric matters for the scientific ivory tower of medicine. They relate in the most fundamental way to public health and medical care practice, and public policy, and the efforts to control the coronary epidemic. For reasons therefore of both scientific accuracy and public well-being, it behooves editors to do everything possible to deal with such issues as thoroughly, roundedly and objectively as possible. This is all the more true when a prestigious journal like the NEJM is involved, with its large circulation and extensive influence, particularly on young physicians.

My purpose in writing this is not simply to present this evaluation and concern to you forcefully, but also to make a specific request: I respectfully ask for an

-2-

Arnold S. Relman, M.D.  
September 23, 1977

opportunity -- in behalf of myself and possibly other colleagues as well -- to reply in the pages of Medical Intelligence -- Current Concepts to the Mann article, and to present data documenting the errors of fact, distortions of fact and omission of fact in Dr. Mann's paper, leading to erroneous conclusions on his part.

Thank you for your consideration of the matter.  
I look forward to an early reply.

Very sincerely yours,

Jeremiah Stamler, M.D.

JS/nd

P.S. Aside from my general concerns, as Chairman of the years-long Coronary Drug Project I have a particular concern to reply to the one-sided inferences drawn from the data of that study by Dr. Mann.