

Tape recorded 14 Feb 74 16 Feb.
La Oral History of Cardiology 74

This is Ancel Keys. My interest in heart disease began at the end of world war two when my group at the University of Minnesota turned from work on the problems of starvation and dietary deficiency, caused by the war, to consider a new area for long-time research. The emerging ~~new~~ epidemic of coronary heart disease seemed to cry out for attention with a multi-disciplinary approach that appealed to us.

We reasoned that coronary heart disease was becoming so common in the United States that if we examined a sizeable group of middle-aged men and followed them with annual examinations in a prospective study some of those men become coronary victims. Comparison of the pre-disease characteristics of the coronary cases with those of the men who stayed well would disclose what are now called coronary risk factors and would provide clues to prevention.

Tape sent to Jeff Diamond 2-22-74

So in 1947, with the help of grant number Ten of the new National Heart Institute, we started a prospective study on 300 business and professional men at in the Twin Cities. Later this approach was adapted at Framingham at half a dozen centers. As we compared notes after some years we were delighted to ~~find~~ ^{see} that excellent agreement in the identification of major risk factors.

Early in the Minnesota program we concluded that serum cholesterol concentration is probably a risk factor and that systematic research was needed to discover the effect of the diet on the cholesterol level in man. Accordingly, in 1949 we began controlled dietary experiments that extended over twenty years in mental hospitals and the laboratory. As a result, it is now possible to predict the average serum cholesterol response to specified dietary change.

The reputed differences among

countries in coronary heart disease incidence seemed to offer another approach to research on the coronary problem. In 1952 I was fortunate to be able to start operations along that line in Italy, Spain and England. Over the years many colleagues joined in research that extended all over the world and led to the prospective study generally known as the Seven Countries Study covering 15,000 men at now logging over 150,000 man-years of experience. That international program is now my major interest.

Another activity that gives me satisfaction was my organization of the Research Committee and later the Council for Epidemiology and Prevention of the International Society of Cardiology. The sixth annual teaching seminar of our Council is scheduled for August, 1974, in Budapest. From these 10-day seminars a large number of young cardiologists and medical scientists have returned to their

homes in more than 40 countries, bringing insight and enthusiasm for epidemiology and prevention of heart disease.

I am ~~happy~~ proud to have participated in a quarter of a century of research and to have seen the advance of knowledge to the point where there are now real prospects of major public health programs for the control ~~of prevention~~ preventing coronary heart disease.

Finally ~~and~~ I am happy to recall the scores of colleagues all over the world ~~that~~ with whom I have been privileged to collaborate in our common cause -- the battle against coronary heart disease.