BOSTON UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

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BUMC - FRAMINGHAM STUDY

Dunlap - HLT

August 23, 1973

Dr. Henry L. Taylor
University of Minnesota
School of Public Health
Stadium Gate 27
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

Dear Henry,

In response to the request made at yesterday's meeting that I supply you with information regarding the form and method of assessment of physical activity in the Framingham Study I have asked Pat McNamara to give me the materials enclosed for your use. The method was developed at the time that Dr. George Mann was aboard and we were trying to determine the usual dietary intake of subjects, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the thought being that a combination of calorie intake, physical energy expenditure, and weight might be good estimates on which to base a conclusion regarding the total metabolism of each subject.

Accordingly, we asked each person about the usual physical activity in which he engaged over a 24-hour period, attempting to average this out for both week day and week-ends. We first inquired about the average number of hours of sleep. This was quite readily obtained. We then tried to find out how many hours of the remaining day the subject spent in a sitting position, not engaging in any unusual physical activity. The amount of time in slight exertion included walking at a slow pace, e.g. a sales clerk. Heavy physical work was used to describe such activities as chopping wood, swimming, skiing, doing heavy manual work, etc. and moderate activities included all the remainder. As I told you yesterday, we never made any claims for the great accuracy of this assessment and considered it rather crude, although, as you know, the indices arrived at did turn out to be predictive.

One of the evaluations which we made may have been an even better test of the validity of this method. I forget whether we published this, but it did turn out that the lowest serum cholesterol levels were in the thinnest people with the highest physical activity indices.

George Mann made the determination regarding the weighting of the different factors based on the relative increase in oxygen consumption estimated for the different levels of activity. A value of 1.0 was assigned to the sleeping status. Thus, the lowest physical activity would be 24 for those who spent their entire time in the sack.

From our experience I believe it is fair to say that this index can be determined in from 2 to 5 minutes' time by the interviewer. As with everything else in this business, there obviously are some people in whom attempting to extract this information is like pulling teeth and not worth the effort.

I hope this information will be of help to you. If there is anything further I can do, please let me know. I doubt that I will be back in Minneapolis on Sunday since I have developed gastroenteritis and am currently at a low ebb.

Sincerely yours,

Thomas R. Dawber, M. D.

TRD:h
Enc.