



RIJKSINSTITUUT VOOR VOLKSGEZONDHEID EN MILIEU

Prof. Henry Blackburn  
 University of Minnesota  
 Division of Epidemiology  
 School of Public Health  
 Suite 300  
 1300 South Second Street  
 Minneapolis, MN 55454-1015  
 USA

*Letters*

Bilthoven : June 20, 1997  
 Our reference : 175/97 SBII DK/ar  
 Your reference :  
 Subject :  
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Dear Henry,

Thank you for your letter of June 19. In relation to your talk in Montreal I have two issues that may be of interest. In relation to diet the issue of total fat is very important. I am very much convinced, based among the Mediterranean experience in the Seven Countries Study, that total fat is not important in relation to (cardiovascular) health. Only the specific fatty acids matter. Reduction of saturated fat is the main public health message and an adequate intake of N-3 and N-6 PUFA's. This idea seems now also to be supported by the Harvard group. Meir Stampfer at a recent meeting in Crete used the following three arguments for showing that total fat is not a primary public health issue:

- total fat is not related to cardiovascular disease endpoints
- total fat is not related to cancer endpoints
- total fat is not independent of energy balance related to obesity

I think that it is very important to communicate this message to the public. It is time that we get rid of public education messages as we had in the Netherlands that people should not eat fatty fish because the high fat content is dangerous for health. Also the recently published paper on the nutrition transition may be of interest in this context (see enclosure).

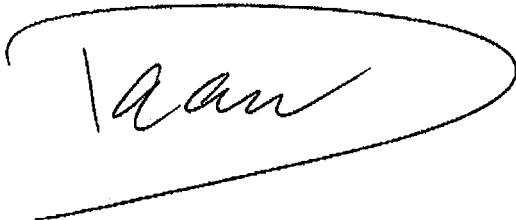
The second issue relates to smoking. The US and the Netherlands are the number 1 and 2 countries in exporting cigarettes. To my opinion we are very hypocritical in the Netherlands

from this point of view. The Dutch government does not agree with the EU proposals for stronger anti-smoking measures. On the other hand in the Public Health Status and Forecasts report we have shown that about 40% of Dutch adults still smoke. We calculated that smoking is responsible for 23.000 deaths a year on a total of 130.000 deaths a year. So on one hand we have anti-smoking campaigns by the Ministry of Public Health but on the other hand because of concerns of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, we don't comply with EU regulations on anti-smoking.

I hope that these examples may be of interest to you.

With best regards,

Sincerely yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Daan', enclosed within a large, hand-drawn oval shape.

Prof. Daan Kromhout  
Director Division of Public Health Research