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Dear Howard:

I have just returned from extensive travels and vacation to encounter your note of August 12 to Mary Winston, Scott Grundy and Richard Hurley about the Nutrition Committee Symposium for Science Writers. I think this is a splendid idea.

I have no remarkable suggestions except that the first hour or hour and a half be a solid background of the nutritional knowledge relating to blood lipids and atherosclerosis and based on all three major disciplines of clinical-pathology, laboratory-experimentation and population studies.

I am sure you have seen the extensive report that we did on Optimal Blood Lipid Levels published in Preventive Medicine in November last year in which we used a similar separation of disciplines.

Scott Grundy might most effectively chair the clinical evidence. I or Bill Connor might best summarize the 20 years of experiments on dietary manipulations in humans and the serum cholesterol response so thoroughly explored by Keys, Anderson and Grande, and Bill Connor himself, Dr. Mattson, Dr. Hegsted and Pete Ahrens. I think it is essential to get this quantitative experience and the prediction equations derived from them before science writers. Again these important contributions are not well known in the scientific or public community. Henry McGill or Robert Wissler would be strongest on the pathological. I or Jeremiah Stamler might be appropriate for presentation of the population data.

Because of the urgency of your request for comment, I simply send these preliminary thoughts.

I believe that Mark Hegsted, Jeremiah Stamler and myself probably embrace the public health view of mass dietary patterns and mass hyperlipidemia. I feel this message is essential to full public (and professional) understanding.

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This public health view should be well represented in addition to the academic disciplines above and it doesn't seem to be in your program.

At the moment your program has these suggestions wrapped up in one short presentation of thirty minutes by Dr. Grundy. I am strongly inclined to the view that this is insufficient background justification for American Heart Diet policy. You rely on Scott to review all the evidence on diet, hyperlipidemia and coronary artery disease, and all the evidence on diet modification. This is an overwhelming task which should probably be given more space and specialized review. In contrast you allow a full hour to questions of individual risk and apoproteins and genetics. These are not really appropriate to the general AHA diet recommendations, and only if they are put in the context of the wider clinical, animal and population data. In the emphasis on genetics and apoproteins you are departing from the overall impact of the American Heart public recommendations and concentrating on the individual practice of specific diagnosis and tailored therapy for relatively rare conditions. That is an important segment of the clinical problem but does not address the public health diet recommendations of the Heart Association. I think the scientific presentations must involve all the major disciplines, as well as the particular subjects you have suggested, and emphasize the congruence of their evidence.

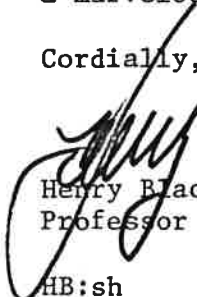
With respect to new scientific information, I think the 10-year data from the Seven Countries study as recently published by Harvard University Press and Dr. Keys must be touched upon as well as a thorough-going explanation for the "possible" excess risk at the lower end of the distributions for weight and serum cholesterol in certain populations.

You should be aware that June next year will probably be about the time of the release of Jane Brody's new book on nutrition which will be a Book of the Month selection and will be an important contribution to the public and professional education.

In essence I find your specific suggestions very good, but a certain diffuseness in the subjects and organization which I think could be tightened up by an initial and thorough-going scientific presentation, followed by aspects of food production, food selection, eating patterns and behavior.

It would seem to me that a scientific sub-committee from the Nutrition Committee might effectively work with you to tighten up the program which in general is a marvelous idea. I hope these "tough" comments are useful.

Cordially,



Henry Blackburn, M.D.
Professor and Director

HB:sh

bpc: J. Stamler
J. Brody
S. Grundy
M. Winston