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March 12, 1981

Reuben Berman, M.D.
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Dear Reuben:

I enjoyed your book reviews of Ancel's and Roy Dawber's books. I am in the course of reviewing Dawber's for Science. You are quite right that the manner of selection of populations was quite different between the United States and other countries, but an implication that the cohorts in the other countries were selected differently isn't right on. They were similar large chunk samples, representing very close to 100% of all men in the geographic areas in all those regions. They were all of one type of "nutritional man," that is the rural peasant/farmer/pastoralist/fisherman.

Another interpretation of the benchmark would be slightly different from yours. The study not only is a "benchmark which should stimulate further studies to find causes of differences," but isn't it mainly a benchmark in indicating the predominantly cultural nature and potentially remedial nature of the causes now established? (Cup half full or half empty story.)

Finally, a basic difference between the Dawber and the Keys books is not really "grandiose versus microcosm" but individual prediction within a culture versus cultural differences, the one relating to risk and preventive practice in individuals in our culture, and the other related to the causes for major population differences and epidemics, thus, public health implications. You may share my idea that failure to separate these individual from group needs, conceptually, is responsible for 95% of the controversy, and 99% of the avoid controversy, between medical people.

Your reviews were so very personal and readable, and I am sure will turn people on to both books. I personally found Ancel's book difficult going. Confidentially, also the Framingham style of publication, numerous widely-spread articles giving wide involvement of many collaborators, and then its remarkable final encapsulation in five or six pages for each topic by Dawber, is magnificent and successful. The ponderous one-man summaries every ten years, with no intervening publications or sharing of responsibility provides

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a good model, I suggest, of how not to do the job successfully.

Obviously, these private thoughts will not be expressed elsewhere, especially in Capri. I missed you at the Minnesota Academy of Medicine, which was pleasant.

Cordially,

Henry Blackburn, M.D.
Professor and Director

HB:jml