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TWIN CITIES

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CONGRES - RELMAN

March 30, 1981

Arnold S. Relman, M.D., Editor
NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL OF MEDICINE
Massachusetts Medical Society
10 Shattuck Street
Boston, MA. 02115

Dear Dr. Relman:

The masterly summary of progress in biochemical research by Donald Frederickson in the February 26th issue was full of the exciting progress in medicine and persuasion about the importance of maintaining U.S. scientific leadership. Agreed! But the distinguished predictions that the entire human genome may be mapped before the end of the century, and insights that sometime "not too far off" all the human proteins will be identified and measured, nowhere establishes the crucial and broad view that we learn in second year medical school about all disease as an interaction between host and environment. Nowhere in this exciting recounting of the last twenty years is there the equally exciting concept that mass or epidemic disease in humans is an interaction between widespread host factors and powerful environmental-cultural factors.

Scholarly fascination with the "baroque beauty of multiple overlapping controls" should not leave our scientific leaders blinded to the real world on this planet in which cultural factors operating on ubiquitous, intrinsic susceptibility are major determinants of our mass disease burden. Research and applications in these interactions is integral to a balanced view and full understanding of human biology and disease.

Sincerely,

Henry Blackburn, M.D.
Professor and Director

HB:jml