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January 28, 1988

Dr. Ancel Keys  
410 Groveland, Apt. 802  
Minneapolis, MN 55402

Dear Ancel:

I enjoyed reading your CVD manuscript on body fat. It seems to me you've considered and answered most of the questions that should be raised. The manuscript is extremely straightforward, crisp and to the point.

I'm interested that you've changed CVD or Business and Professional Men's Study to Twin Cities Prospective Study. Fine. It might be well to refer to it as "formerly known as" so that old friends can recognize it and the literature can make a connection. Not very important. I like the new name.

The most obvious question that is not addressed I believe, is that of the effect of individual change in weight. I could understand how this would vastly complicate your analysis and you might want to avoid it or approach it separately. However, change in weight in the early or middle part of the observation period, would be more interesting of course than late change, which we did not measure.

Other than that, my remarks are minor and editorial. You might want to use "body fatness and weight" instead of just the term fatness throughout. I was a little confused by the term "relative fatness" when I believe most of the values are not relative, say to a population standard. Weight relative to height, or girth relative to something else is fine, but the term relative fatness confused me a bit.

Despite your touching on it in several places and considering blood pressure in the multivariate analysis, the sequence of fatness or elevated relative weight leading to elevated blood pressure and leading to early death could be examined, it seems to me in your customary straightforward way rather than by multiple logistic analysis. At least we need to know how much blood pressure accounted for the excess of nonsurvivors among the fat. I agree that this issue is not important if there is no relationship of fatness to survival. However, you did find a relationship and if disappearance of significance was due primarily to blood pressure, we still don't get away from the pathogenic chain from obesity.

A small point is your strong statement that "the majority of smokers have quit many years before death" was not documented. You did not describe for the naive why you used the log linear analysis.

Age at entry was very interesting and I think would deserve a small table as well.

Note that in the introduction and methods you don't mention the total number of subjects, which should appear probably in your second sentence "Among X men, aged 45-55 at entry, 172 were dead, etc."

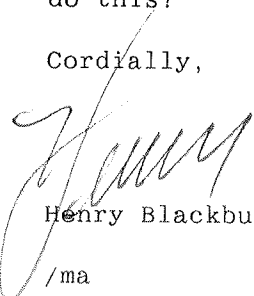
One of the most helpful things to do when results are disparate is to try to analyze the reason for the disparities. Since Framingham's results were unique, it might be useful to comment on possible reasons for their uniqueness. I've always been bothered by the "subterfuge" in the "30-year followup" which is in no sense a 30-year followup, rather it's a 2-year followup repeated 15 times. In most of their studies there is no consideration of the original cohort. Since Framingham makes the most noise in the field, and most noise about this particular issue, it might be useful for you to get their latest paper and dissect it a bit.

Thanks for letting me see this.

Otherwise, I hope that our data center has been responsive to your needs for getting data on the VAX and I appreciate your continuing to look for support for this. With the remarkable quality and consistency of the work you produce there's no reason on earth why you shouldn't get support from any size NIH grant you want. If we can help you with the frustrating details of rewriting your grants, I think that's a better approach than being upset that they turn us down. This is routine nowadays that study sections "need educating" and it takes at least two and sometimes three proposals to educate them and to write things in a way that they can grasp. The pink sheets you gave me on the last one suggested that you may not have been responsive to an earlier pink sheet suggestion. Since I didn't have the earlier pink sheets I don't know what your application was not responsive to, so I can't be helpful. But we have been pretty effective with grants in recent years if you would like us to give it a going-over, provide us with the information.

Thanks for the early reprint. I am putting together a group of "seminal reports" of the Division before 1972 for the education of the faculty and students who are not aware of past history. In that regard it might be nice if we could again put you on for a spring or summer division seminar so that at least each class in the School and Division can get exposed to you once a year. Would you be willing to do this?

Cordially,



Henry Blackburn, M.D.

/ma

410 Groveland Ave. No. 802  
Minneapolis MN 55403  
February 6, 1988

Professor Henry Blackburn  
Division of Epidemiology  
School of Public Health  
University of Minnesota  
Stadium Gate 27  
Minneapolis MN 55455

Dear Henry,

Thank you for your good letter dated January 28th about the ms. "Longevity and Fatness in Middle Age". Your comments on the ms. and on other matters are useful.

In the ms. I have indicated "formerly known as the CVD study" and give the numbers at risk on the first page. I refer to "body fatness and weight" as suggested. Also I am getting away from the log linear model. Now I am with a computer run I cannot do on my machine; then I'll put the ms in final form and send it -- where?

Toshima requested a statement about how I propose to use the aid from the Noboru Kimura Foundation. I wrote the statement and sent it off. I enclose a copy for your office even if you think it unnecessary to read it. It occurs to me that with slight changes this could well be the basis for a request for a grant-in-aid from another source. What do you think? My main financial concern is the \$8,000 a year we pay for travel but I daresay it is hopeless to ask for help with travel costs though I must be in Europe part of the time to keep track of mortality follow-up and confer with colleagues who can come to Minnelea but not to the States.

Finally, we have our tickets and will leave for Italy on February 11th, returning April 30th. Before we leave I expect to have finished editing the Seven Country data files so I can start in earnest at Minnelea the analyses of 20- and 25-year death rates. Two tables in the material going to Toshima show how we stand in death rates now. Rose Hilk, Jeff Johnson, and Jim Huber have been most helpful in getting the data files onto diskettes so I can do analyses on my computers at Minnelea. Some analyses must be done here because of limitations of my computers.

At 6:30 am I called Martti Karvonen. All is well at Minnelea; the thermometer was reading 64 F. (1:30 pm their time).

We'll see you Wednesday night -- ready to fly Thursday!

  
Ancel Keys

410 Groveland Ave. No. 802  
Minneapolis MN 55403  
May 25, 1988

Professor Henry Blackburn  
Division of Epidemiology  
School of Public Health  
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Dear Henry,

Herewith is a copy of the response to the paper by Bonanome and Grundy in N Engl J Med on stearic acid and beef in the diet. Note that I have added your paragraph and put the authors as A.K. and H.B. I think this should be sent to NEJM now.

You may like to know that I have written to withdraw my ms on BMR from the J Clin Epidem, explaining that I have now 57 more deaths in the Twin Cities Prospective Study and want to include them in a new analysis. I don't think I'll send anything more to J Clin Epidem. Although my ms was substantially accepted if I would attend to some comments, the comments of the two reviewers were puerile and based on ignorance and logical non-sequiturs. Further, I have lots of questions about Feinstein, the Editor.

I also enclose some copies of articles:

- 1) Six copies of the 1953 article that started a lot of activity and argument. I did not know that this had been published until it was discussed by Michael Oliver in his article in Brit Heart J1987.
- 2) Four copies of Oliver's article.
- 3) A copy of Tavia Gordon's surprising new piece in which he admits the priority of our prospective Twin Cities Study..
- 4) A copy of the "Nutrition Classics" article reprinting parts of the 1957 and 1965 papers from LPH.

Ancel Keys