

*Comesp - Swanson*



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November 21, 1988

*11/21/88*  
Dr. John Swanson  
6424 Nordic Circle  
Minneapolis, MN 55435

Dear Jack:

Many thanks for your note and comments. Let me hasten to say that it should not be accepted that the association of low blood cholesterol levels with hemorrhagic stroke is causal. As my Japanese colleagues pointed this out to me over the years, I always interpreted it as meaning that in populations eating a traditional Japanese diet (low in protein, low in fat, high in carbohydrate and salt), that combination of circumstances resulted in hypertension and stroke. The fact that their stroke rates have gone down dramatically as their average cholesterol values have gone up is not sufficient evidence of cause, because their blood pressure levels have also come down dramatically and they have abandoned their traditional diet. Other causes of hemorrhagic tendencies, including alcohol, have not been excluded as confounding factors. So, it's premature to think that low blood cholesterol is dangerous, for anybody. Under no circumstances would I consider intervention for individuals or populations to raise cholesterol levels. I would consider all possible interventions to lower blood pressure, however, starting out with hygienic approaches.

Yes, if you increase saturated fat and cholesterol intake and didn't gain weight, HDL would probably rise as well as LDL and total cholesterol. However, in the presence of low total cholesterol there is no earthly reason to raise HDL cholesterol. The populations with the lowest atherosclerosis in the world are low in both. In summary, I don't think there is good evidence that low cholesterol values are causal in cerebral hemorrhage. I see no reason to attempt to elevate HDL when LDL and total are both low.

You present little evidence that you have significant hypertension. The things that reduce diastolic also reduce systolic pressure. The hygienic approach with low sodium, low alcohol and high potassium would be the reasonable approach.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Blackburn', written over the word 'Cordially'.

Henry Blackburn, MD  
Professor and Director

/tmw

Corresp-Swanson

*file correspondence*


27 November 1988

Dear Henry,

Thank you for your very thoughtful and complete reply to my questions and concerns. As always, you are able to cut right to the heart of things and offer sensible and well-thought-out responses. Be assured that I consider it an honor to know you although perhaps I'm taking advantage of a friendship to pester you with rather trivial questions.

Thanks again for your advice and reassurance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jack Swanson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".