



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
TWIN CITIES

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School of Public Health  
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*Snowdon*

*Done  
3/10/86*

March 7, 1986

*DS DJ  
meeting held this  
week.*

MEMORANDUM

TO: D. Snowdon

FROM: H. Blackburn

*3*

Thank you for your nice seminar last week. I hope that you will feel responsive to a proposition that you, Dave Jacobs and I meet and develop an approach to the analysis of the issues of so-called competing risks, though that's not exactly the right term. I would like to develop a meta-analysis strategy, perhaps not as formalized as Peto's, concerning the clinical trial and observational studies in cardiovascular disease, structured to allow a summary impression of dietary component effects individually and then perhaps composing an "optimal diet" and estimating its overall effect on the major chronic diseases and survival. I think since we won't have the data we really need on this we have to talk about what we can use. I would think this should be a stimulating activity, developing an analytical and an editorial approach. Both will be useful for us (and for me in particular in my new charge on the diet/health committee of the National Research Council). We are charged with just that aspect: to measure the impact of diet on several diseases simultaneously and on survival.

I've never been interested in "longevity" as an endpoint, but maybe you have moved me a few millimeters on that point. Certainly, attempts to use survival, as well as all-causes death (a better term in my view than total mortality) would be an advance. I have never understood the use of "longevity" because it is such a highly estimated parameter rather than measured. Anyway, I'm grateful to see the intensity and quality of your thinking on this issue.

From a policy standpoint, I would like to see you, and certainly in our joint editorial activities, seek for the resolution of controversy, rather than the "first stage analysis" you are now doing which tends to exaggerate issues by such statements as "it is unethical to recommend a diet protective in one disease for the population as a whole." I think we can do better than we do in terms of public health recommendations, and it would be nice to back up recommendations with a logical approach, if we don't find the "magic" analytical approach. I'm asking my secretary to put together an initial meeting between you, Dave Jacobs and myself to discuss this issue.

Memo: D. Snowdon

Page 2

I would be happy to have a copy of your diagrams of "competing risks" as a basis for our first discussion. I do think that population attributable risk is the best way to look at public health strategy, certainly not the only way, but far superior to the relative risk approach.

pc: D. Jacobs



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done  
6/12/86  
ST. PC & file  
Blackburn  
Snowdon  
file to him  
Return to him  
confidential  
HG

MEMORANDUM

June 11, 1986

TO: Henry Blackburn  
FROM: Dave Snowdon  
RE: My involvement with MHHP and MHS

*attitude coming forward?*

To D.S. Confidential. it's not just naive, it's attitude, style & process. not quite there yet!  
Dave: Skill #1 (count the # of "Is + mps")  
Try to work and talk as a team, please - it's fun!  
HG

I am willing to spend 20% time effort on the analyses of data from MHHP and MHS during the next six months. At the end of that period, I suggest that we get together and decide on my percent effort for the future. I envision spending 10 to 30% effort on MHHP and MHS analyses in the future.

I am willing to start work immediately. As a first step, I would like to hire a 50% time research assistant with strong computer programming skills. This same person would spend an additional 5 to 25% time on analyses of Adventist data and also help with the nun study. That effort would be paid by the small amount of funds I have available for those purposes. If the research assistant does work 75% time I would expect that MHHP would pick up the fringe benefits. I would like to advertise for the research assistant as soon as possible.

Initially, I intend to work with Rebecca Mullis and Dave Jacobs in the analyses of MHHP data. I will do some exploratory analyses during the summer months. In early fall, we could get together and talk about the direction of my analyses. Right now, I need to get my hands into the data.

DS/af  
cc: Dave Jacobs  
Rebecca Mullis  
Dean Surbey

*Simple good*  
*No. Jacobs responsible for MHHP evaluation.*  
*our?*  
*release?*  
Dave: One usual way of collaboration is to hear the intellectual side, the ideas etc. + present these, in collaboration to RM + DJ. to a meeting with Exec. Bd.  
I suggest you get together with your colleagues & arrange such a short presentation & agreed upon goals effort & staffing HG. of MHHP



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Snowdon/Folsom Done  
9/23 dlm

September 22, 1986

TO: Dave Snowdon and Aaron Folsom  
FROM: Henry Blackburn  
SUBJECT: Brown Bag Luncheon

B

I liked your idea for the brown bag luncheon. It is a departure from the idea of using the seminar time, but it sets up a purely social time. I'm in favor of trying it. I think it needs to be in an attractive room and not a big classroom and hope you will enlist Kathy's help for this. Perhaps the Division can supply fruit and beverages to go with the students own brown bag lunches, once a month.

If it's going to be purely social as we now have it, I would prefer Dave not set himself up as "Chair", but as convener to recruit people. In other words, I would prefer us simply to have a place to have lunch together without formal chairing.

If this doesn't work, then I would prefer something a little more formal, in which case I thought we spoke of leaving to the students the program rather than to faculty.

In general my response is positive. I would like to see a primarily social/intellectual exchange and next, if that is unsuccessful, to have it primarily with the ideas from the students, appointing student coordinators rather than faculty coordinators. What do you think?

/dlm

Snowdon



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*file comp*

MEMORANDUM

September 24, 1986

TO: Dave Jacobs  
FROM: Dave Snowdon  
SUBJECT: MHHP Analyses

*pc*

*J. Snowdon I am grateful for your sensitivity to the need & investment of MHHP faculty in the analyses you all now mandated to spend. There will be enough story to go around, I'm sure. And the issue of E vs C comparisons is a policy issue that I also appreciate your sensitivity about.*

Before you leave on your extensive travels, I thought it would be good to update you about the status of my involvement with MHHP. I am currently working with Peter Hannan on some analyses looking at the "natural history" of health-related characteristics in the comparison communities. Peter and I are in the process of doing analyses in which we will investigate the changes in blood pressure, total caloric intake, serum cholesterol, weight, and caloric expenditure that occur with age among the cohorts in the comparison communities. We will also do such analyses in the intervention communities, although it is not clear to us right now, if and how we might present such data on the intervention communities without exposing the possible effect of intervention.

I think it is going to take us several weeks of preliminary analyses before a clear theme for such analyses and subsequent papers will emerge. However, basically, I would like to pursue analyses that would describe the natural changes in health-related characteristics that occur with age, and the correlations of those changes with each other (e.g., what amount of the changes in blood pressure that occur with age is accountable by changes in weight with age). I have attached a copy of a recent study from the October edition of The American Journal of Epidemiology. This study used cross-sectional data to examine the contribution of weight to the change in blood pressure with age. This is the kind of analyses that I envision doing. The difference is that our data would be better in that we will have actual observed change in weight, blood pressure, and other characteristics that occur longitudinally in the same individuals.

HEALTH SCIENCES

*effort you are embedded & most MHHP faculty are still blinded & will be for some weeks. Thanks  
H B*

As you know, I have been talking to Bob Jeffery, Becky Mullis, Peter Hannan, and Mike Sprafka about this type of analysis. Like yourself, they all express an interest in collaborating. I fully realize that most of these people have been contributing to MHHP for years and will have the privilege of pursuing analyses or papers that may directly relate to these topics. For example, I am going to do analyses relating changes in weight with age, but it is entirely likely that Bob Jeffery might get excited about these analyses and might want to pursue the analyses in more depth as the senior author of a paper on such a topic. I am flexible. My own immediate concern is just to get some analyses going so that all of us can start looking at printouts and assess the relevance and future of such a type of analyses.

After several weeks of preliminary exploratory analyses and discussions with Jeffery, Mullis, Hannon, and Sprafka, I hope that we, as a group, can come to some agreement about the possible papers that might come out of this. My own personal goal would be to get a draft of a manuscript on some aging-related topic using MHHP data by the end of the year.

I really appreciate your continued support in relation to my involvement in MHHP. I look forward to continued cooperation with you and the other investigators in MHHP.

cc: Henry Blackburn ✓  
Robert Jeffery  
Rebecca Mullis  
Mike Sprafka  
Peter Hannon

*Sandy  
Judd.*