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December 10, 1993

Dr. Ivan Gyarfas
WHO
CVD Unit
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

Dear Ivan:

We have recently returned from a very successful 35-year anniversary of the Seven Countries Study hosted by Hironori Toshima. I was personally very sad that Lamm and Gyarfas and the Hungarian Study were not represented. At any rate, you will be pleased to know that it was a worthwhile scientific conference as well, and I have largely completed editing the proceedings.

I am also editing with Daan Kromhout and Alessandro Menotti a history of the Seven Countries Study. All of the early contacts were made between Dr. Keys and people who pointed out differences in coronary disease rates as well as diet in various countries and Keys was hot on the trail. I have had the impression, however, based on a conversation long ago with George Pickering, that much of the impetus for the formal study, in other words, a definitive examination of the diet-heart hypothesis, may have begun at the WHO Expert Committee meeting in Geneva in 1955.

As I compile the history of the Seven Countries Study and some other work on the history of CVD epidemiology, it would be very useful to have that Expert Committee Report. Sir George was a member of that committee and described to me a dramatic happening there in which he challenged Ancel Keys' hypothesis.

Though I keep an extensive collection of WHO documents, I don't have that one and it does not exist in our library. I wonder if you might be able to obtain a copy or photocopy of that for me.

I was sorry not to respond to your recent kind invitation on the Uruguay meeting. I am making big plans for a major sabbatical and/or terminal leave from the University and am doing my best to change my career orientation substantially, particularly involving presentations in areas of very remote expertise on my part. I am sure you understood.

Here we are still mourning the loss of Geoffrey Rose, a remarkable man and outstanding leader in our field. We are happy to report on the successful status of Jeremiah Stamler, 10 days post major hip replacement and he is doing well on ambulatory care at home.

Many best wishes.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Henry (ny)".

Henry Blackburn, MD
Mayo Professor of Public Health