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April 13, 1996

Henry Blackburn, M.D.  
University of Minnesota  
Minneapolis MN 55454-1015

2/6 ← pc RL Jacobsen CSPI  
Mike ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ (confidential)

Dear Henry:

I wanted to add my support to your recent views on the FDA approval of Olestra as indicated in your recent editorial in the New England Journal of Medicine. I like many others was concerned by the safety issues raised with Olestra. Proctor and Gamble had showed the nutrition committee much of the scientific data on Olestra and in May 1994 asked us to send a letter of support to the FDA. Although I felt I could not do that. I chose to write a letter that emphasized the importance of safety and closed with the line. "The AHA encourages the FDA to continue with its review of the safety standards of all fat replacers such as olestra so that the food supply can be both safe and enjoyable for the consumer." It was my intention to emphasize the importance of the FDA's scrutiny of all fat replacers including Olestra.

Frankly I was surprised that olestra passed scrutiny without additional long-term studies. Your editorial has shed some light on this. I do think that the Olestra issue is partly symptomatic of misplaced emphasis. The AHA, NCEP, and others have emphasized, I believe correctly, that lower saturated fat intake, lower dietary cholesterol intake and reducing calories to avoid obesity are the cornerstones of the a heart-healthy diet. The public (and industry) seems to have interpreted this as going to a "no-fat" diet. Incredibly, the population trend toward consuming high calorie, sweetened low fat foods is clearly a problem in combating obesity. In talking to patients they seem to see the appeal of Olestra as another way to go "no fat."

My only consolation is that when my 13 year old daughter saw me reading your editorial on Olestra she dismissed it by saying "Olestra's not really food; I think people are just kidding themselves." I will discuss this further with Ron Krauss and others at our next meeting in April. Again, thanks for your lucid and thoughtful editorial.

Sincerely,



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April 22, 1996

Michael Jacobson, PhD  
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Dear Michael:

Thanks for your nice note on the olestra editorial. I was impressed with your effective sound bite on the Peter Jennings program! (As usual, I mumbled in my beard.) I was also "pleased" with how Ruth Oxenberg and George Strait focused the issue among many that could have been made.

I do think it would be appropriate if some of us raise rewording of the label with Lynn Larsen in regard to seeking Committee counsel.

Regards,



Henry Blackburn, MD  
Mayo Professor of Public Health (Emeritus)