Letters to the Editor must not exceed 400 words in length and must be limited to three authors and five references. They should not have tables or figures and should relate solely to an article published in Circulation within the preceding 12 weeks. Authors of letters selected for publication will receive prepublication proofs, and authors of the article cited in the letter will be invited to reply. Replies must be signed by all authors listed in the original publication. Please submit three typewritten, double-spaced copies of the letter to Herbert L. Fred, MD, % the Circulation Editorial Office. Letters will not be returned.

Effects of Walking on Coronary Heart Disease in Elderly Men

To The Editor:

The recent article by Hakim et al. reports a beneficial effect of walking on coronary heart disease in elderly men; this has important clinical implications regarding physical activity as a modifiable risk factor.

To help isolate the independent effect of distance walked on coronary heart disease, subtle statistical analyses were done; these showed no significant association with major and minor cardiovascular risk factors, such as high cholesterol levels, hypertension, smoking, diabetes, and alcohol intake.

Recently, the Nutrition Committee of the American Heart Association strongly suggested that obesity be upgraded from the status of a contributing risk factor to that of a major risk factor for coronary heart disease. There is compelling evidence that obesity, over the long term, increases Medicare costs and the risks of morbidity, such as stroke, coronary heart disease, or diabetes mellitus. Lack of physical activity could be at least one possible explanation for the exaggerated rate of cardiovascular events in obese patients.

If the body mass index is available for all study subjects, we think that the database of this trial provides an excellent opportunity to calculate the association between obesity and distance walked.

Hannes Gaenzer, MD
Wolfgang Sturm, MD
Guenther Neumayr, MD
Department of Internal Medicine
University of Innsbruck
Innsbruck, Austria

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Hannes Gaenzer, Wolfgang Sturm and Guenther Neumayr

Circulation. 2000;102:e16
doi: 10.1161/01.CIR.102.2.e16

Circulation is published by the American Heart Association, 7272 Greenville Avenue, Dallas, TX 75231
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Print ISSN: 0009-7322. Online ISSN: 1524-4539

The online version of this article, along with updated information and services, is located on the
World Wide Web at:
http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/102/2/e16

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