

Meteorological Office, Stonehouse, Glos.
Iron Acton

2/11/43

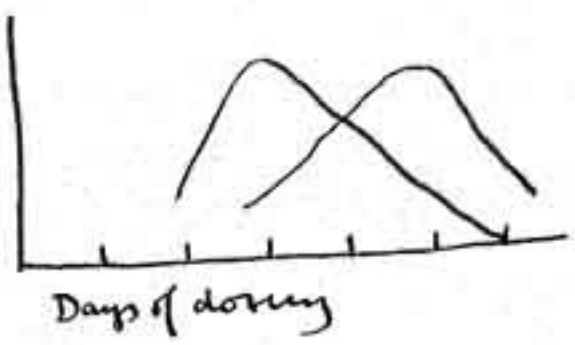
Dear Fisher

I think you are in Cambridge - or at least
hope this will be forwarded. I am on a research
job in Met. but before that was in R.A.M.C. I was to
have gone out $\frac{1}{2}$ Mobile Hygiene Lab., but then
I was considered too old & sent round testing
urines - \rightarrow job Nov. '41 - May '42, when I resigned.
Actually I was trying to ascertain the vitamin C
reserves of troops - see Nature 2/11/43. I did
about 5000 ^{samples} I thought the thing about useless -
and I was wrong. L.J. Harris now tells me the
C - even when it is present in amounts far
removed from scurvy - may still be important
for wound healing. But I found one queer
thing. At a military camp. I tested 50 R.A.M.C. &
50 infantry. Some were in sections say A & B,
merely for A.R.P. duties - they mixed together.

When I worked out results I found that A (2) saturated about two days before B - I mean the peak of the curve was that, there is always a good scatter. I could see no reason for it. Actually on account of various casualties there were 21 in A & 22 in B, or vice versa. I just had to confess I was unable to account for it. But four months later I returned for another series and on enquiry I found that the Spt. dispenser had dosed (3/4 g. ascorbic acid) say B. Then infanty arrived & being visitors he dosed them. A slipped away for breakfast, ^{& they were dosed} I had impressed on him that the test should be repeated exactly each day, so he kept up this order - so I was told - actually he had left before second visit, but man who had been dosed told me. Infanty had breakfasted before coming. It pointed therefore to the fact that the

ascorbic acid (vitamin C) was better utilized - or less destroyed - after food. This indicates that it is best to eat dessert after ones meals - the grape-fruit before meals wd. be dietetically wasteful. I suggested in my report that this should be tested by direct experiment. As far as I know no steps were taken to do so. It has occurred to me that you could apply your statistics to say whether my conclusion had any validity from the one trial. At home I have the full results - the table and the curves plotted therefrom, something like this

~~Ascorbic acid~~
 %
 sat.
 Number
 of men



very roughly.

It seems to me that with that number of men the (4
chance of the peak of one lot being well away from
that of the other is likely to be small. But one can
of course get an individual dosed after breakfast
showing up worse than another dosed before.

If your results show something definite I expect
the D.G., A.M.C. (Lt. Gen. A. Hood) wd. be interested
and we might submit a note on the matter to the
J. R. A. M. Corps. It wd. be rather amusing to get
definite evidence for "to be taken after
meals". I remember you had two sons who
stayed on the Salpa. It is a bad time for sons, so
I hope both are well. Mine is still at school. My
brother (Lt. A.M.C.) lost his only boy, Capt. R.A. in
Tunisia - he got M.C. posthumously.

V. curiously, I thought of asking you when reading
the M. & S. N. account of statistical work at
Rothamsted.

Yours sincerely

W. R. S. Atkins.