center are successfully coping with the variety of problems which are bound to develop in such a large pioneering project. In terms of the basic scientific value, scientific excellence, ethics, community and scientists' cooperation, administration, and fiscal prudence, MRFIT is maintaining successful progress toward its objectives.*

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Health Statistics

Horacio Fabrega's article, "The need for an ethnomedical science" (19 Sept. 1975, p. 969) and the comments by Bergner *et al.* (Letters, 9 Jan., p. 26) were indeed timely. This year's AAAS annual meeting included a symposium, Health Status Indexes—Their Role in Tomorrow, which addressed the same issues. Information was presented about the current applications of health indicators, such as morbidity and mortality, within the social indicator framework. Discussion focused on the methodology of measuring positive aspects of health, with implications for developing health indexes for policy purposes.

Measures of health are now becoming sufficiently developed to assist in the decision-making process. Various research efforts during the last 50 years have produced significant literature published in a variety of respected professional journals on the development of measurable concepts of health and disease. Much of this research has been supported by the U.S. federal health establishment, as well as by the United Nations and the World Health Organization.

To coordinate the dissemination of this information and to encourage communication and cooperation among health status researchers, the National Center for Health Statistics, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, has established the Clearinghouse on Health Indexes. The Clearinghouse prepares annotated bibliographies of current information related to health measurement and generates bibliographies on specific subjects. These services are available without charge.

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Climate Research

Among the host of warnings of environmental degradation now facing the public is the claim that disaster is in store if mankind fails to realize that his well-being depends on a stable global climate and that climatic change, either natural or man-made, is a real threat which must be attended to today.

As is true in the case of many environmental advocacy causes, some claims are gross exaggerations, thereby lending less credibility to the remainder. In addition, due in large measure to the degree of ignorance regarding the fundamentals of the nature of climatic variability and change, disagreements among climate experts concerning the plausibility of possible traumatic effects of climatic change have caused confusion on the part of the lay-public and within government circles, making it difficult to assess the true state of affairs.

However, these circumstances are hardly sufficient to account for the lack of federal funding of climate research in response, not just to the clamor of the doomsday prophets, but also to a series of highly authoritative and respectable reports (*1*), all of which have reiterated the need for a major increase in climate research activities. No doubt the demise last spring of the National Climate Program (*2*) can in part be ascribed to the nation's economic difficulties, but there is another more trenchant cause for the problem, specifically a failure to demonstrate to funders of such research the practical benefits that can result within a time frame of relevance to their mandate. For example, at its most ambitious, climate research would generate untold benefits if it could lead to a predictive capability; at present, however, this is more a hope than an expectation. Research funding with such an objective would be long-term, high-risk, and have a