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In a recent paper Richardson (3) reported a study of 6-10-year-old Jamaican children who had been severely malnourished in the first 2 years of life, and compared them with contrast children from the same neighborhoods. He found that small stature, disadvantageous backgrounds, and early malnutrition were each associated with low IQ. Multiple correlation revealed that the smallest contributor to the variance was early severe malnutrition. We feel that this may mislead some readers into minimizing the relationship of severe malnutrition to intellectual development.

The only information available about the nutritional status of the contrast group in early infancy was that they had not been hospitalized for severe malnutrition. Undernutrition by the Wellcome Classification (4) is common in Jamaica and longitudinal studies have shown a prevalence of 20% in the 1st year of life in urban children (2) and 30% in the first 2 years of life in rural children (1). Experience has shown that infant malnutrition tends to occur in specific neighborhoods in Jamaica and the presence of known cases of severe malnutrition would indicate areas of higher prevalence. It is therefore probable that a significant number of the contrast children were underweight during the first 2 years of life. From the available evidence it would seem likely that even mild-moderate malnutrition in infancy is

associated with the level of children's intellectual development. Consequently, the inclusion of such children in Richardson's study would minimize the proportion of the variance found to be due to early malnutrition.

At present we are studying young Jamaican children who are hospitalized with severe malnutrition and comparing them with well nourished children (over 80% expected weight for age) from similar socioeconomic backgrounds and hospitalized with other illnesses. We find that 1 month after discharge from hospitals there is an extremely large difference between the Developmental Quotients of the malnourished and the well nourished children. This difference is in the order of 25 points. From our work so far it would appear that at this age the relative importance of nutritional status in intellectual development is far greater than that found by Richardson.

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