

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Smoking 'Scare of the Week'

Michael Siegel's claims about the alleged effects of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) on restaurant workers qualify for the "Scare of the Week" award ["Restaurant Employees' Risky Business," Health, Aug. 3]. Before food service workers allow themselves to be frightened, they should be aware of the following:

- Dr. Siegel did not do any original research on ETS and restaurant workers. He simply reviewed other people's work, bringing to that review a predetermined viewpoint.

- None of the studies Dr. Siegel reviewed actually examined restaurant workers' exposure to ETS. Rather, he selected some studies that considered the more general issue of workplace smoking and surveys that estimate lung cancer incidence in restaurant workers and then played a statistical shell game.

- Dr. Siegel ignored data that do not support his predetermined conclusion that ETS is harmful to restaurant

workers. He did not mention, for example, that of the 14 studies that considered exposure in the workplace, 12 reported no statistically significant increased risk of lung cancer. The most recent study on ETS, the Brownson study—funded in part by the National Cancer Institute—found no statistically significant relationship between ambient smoke and lung cancer. Dr. Siegel neglects to mention this finding in his review.

- The authors of many of the studies in Dr. Siegel's review come to exactly opposite conclusions from their data than Dr. Siegel did in his review. In one case, Dr. Siegel cites a study as supporting his case, when in fact the study reported that worker exposure to ETS is "up to three orders of magnitude lower" than the level the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration considers permissible for an eight-hour workday.

- None of the surveys in Dr. Siegel's review assessed whether any increased

risk found among restaurant workers might be associated with factors such as particulate matter and gases from cooking; pollution from street traffic; volatile organic compounds from carpets, drapes and furniture; cleaning fluids; pest-control substances; general lifestyle of the individual or other, similar, confounding factors.

Why has Dr. Siegel been so selective and biased in his review? He presented an agenda a year ago in a public-policy paper he wrote during his residency at University of California-Berkeley, in which he called for a "legislated 100 percent smoke-free restaurant policy."

In the present case, Dr. Siegel began with that agenda, went shopping for studies that supported it, found nothing of substance in the data and had to force the conclusion by manipulating what was available.

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Report Links One Form of Leukemia to Smoking

ATLANTA, Aug. 19 (Reuters) — Medical researchers have added another form of cancer, leukemia, to the list of diseases they believe are caused by smoking, a Federal health agency said today.

The United States Office on Smoking and Health, part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, released a report linking smoking to a form of the blood disorder called myeloid leukemia, an uncontrolled proliferation of one kind of blood cell.

"Leukemia should be added to the list of smoking-related diseases," the report says, "and efforts to prevent leukemia should include appropriate attention to the role of smoking."

The report cites findings from 21 studies on the impact of smoking on

leukemia, all indicating that smoking appears to be a cause of leukemia. In fact, the report says, "since the causes of leukemia are largely unknown, this would make smoking the leading known cause of leukemia."

The risk of developing myeloid leukemia is 1.5 times greater for smokers than for nonsmokers, the report says. The risk appears to decrease for those who stop smoking.

Second Form Might Be Linked

Leukemia, from a Greek word meaning "pale blood," occurs when tissues in the bone marrow that form blood cells begin wildly overproducing a particular line of white blood cells. While white blood cells are necessary to fight disease, the white cells produced in leukemia patients are ineffective and eventually crowd out the effective disease fighters as well as platelets, which

are needed to form blood clots.

There are several forms of leukemia, and the new report linked smoking only to myeloid leukemia. A second form of the disease, called lymphocytic leukemia, might also be caused by smoking, the report says, but the evidence is inconclusive.

The report noted several factors could affect the accuracy of the 21 studies, including the possibility that the patients studied might have been exposed to chemicals, like benzene, that are known to cause leukemia.

Nevertheless, the report concludes, "based on the existing epidemiologic data, the analysis of the roles of chance, bias and the criteria for causal inference, it appears that smoking causes myeloid leukemia."

The agency said additional study should be made of the impact of smoking on lymphocytic leukemia.

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