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RISK FACTORS IN NON-SMOKING WIVES
OF SMOKING AND NON-SMOKING HUSBANDS

A proposed survey

PREMISES

Non-smoking wives living with smoking husbands are likely to display greater frequencies and/or intensities of independent risk factors (IRFs) for multifactorial diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular and respiratory ailments. Measuring such frequencies and intensities will define the extent of confounding to be expected in ETS epidemiologic studies involving non-smoking wives, which so far have shown results that vary from apparent protective effects to small apparent elevations of risk. For lung cancer -- and probably for cardiovascular diseases as well -- preliminary evidence shows that differentials in IRFs distribution and intensity would explain the conflicting results of these studies, which are likely due to insufficient randomization afforded by small sample sizes, and to conspicuous disregard of confounders. Accurate measurement of these differentials would bring conclusive evidence that the results of such epidemiologic studies could hardly be attributed to ETS exposure.