

NEWARK EVENING NEWS
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Cigaret Statistics

To the Editor:

Sir—Did you know that wearing the wrong kind of mustache might be proved just as deadly as smoking a pack of cigarettes? Here goes. Let's assume that 187,766 men between the ages of 50 and 70 were interviewed by "trained" volunteers in the Gay 90s. Some of these men never wore mustaches; some wore only beards; some only sideburns, and some combinations of two or three, all in varying degree.

Less than two years later, of those who died, suppose 745 had sported six-inch handle-bar mustaches. Suppose further this was 319 more deaths than was expected if these men had died "at the same rate" as the nonmustachioed men. Wearing just beards, or only sideburns, didn't seem to affect the death rate. So, paralleling the conclusion implied in the ACS smoking versus cancer and heart death rate study released on June 21—wearing the six-inch handle-bar mustaches increased the death rate by 75 per cent!

The simple additional information that 75 per cent more men in the original batch wore the mustaches than didn't wear them, would, of course, make such a conclusion ridiculous. Then why doesn't the fact that there were probably 75 per cent more smokers than nonsmokers in the current group make the alleged 75 per cent higher death rate conclusion equally ridiculous?

The early news releases failed to give this all-important ratio in the original sample of 187,766 men. Later stories gave it as about two to one, or just what would be expected if the smoking were completely irrelevant.

Since the newspapers seem to have room for printing Einstein's latest theories in full—something which only a few persons can understand or be concerned about—it seems

only right that they should publish every single calculation leading to the "75 per cent die sooner" scare-line, which affects half the adult population.

The conclusion might possibly be correct, but so far not one of the news stories I have seen has included a convincing mathematical proof.
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