

# **TOXICOLOGY FORUM**

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## CONTENTS

	Page
Tuesday, February 20, 1990	
<b>Session III - <u>HEALTH EFFECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL TOBACCO SMOKE</u></b>	
Chairman: Gio B. Gori, Health Policy Center, MD	159
<i>REVIEW OF A WORKSHOP: ASSESSING LOW RISK AGENTS FOR LUNG CANCER</i> Ragnar Rylander, University of Gothenborg, Sweden	159
DISCUSSION	167
<i>ASSESSMENT OF EXPOSURE</i> Nancy Haley, American Health Foundation, NY	170
DISCUSSION	184
<i>EPIDEMIOLOGIC STUDIES OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PASSIVE SMOKING AND LUNG CANCER</i> Geoffrey Kabat, American Health Foundation, NY	187
DISCUSSION	200
<i>INVOLUNTARY SMOKING AND LUNG CANCER</i> Lawrence Garfinkel, American Cancer Society, NY	202
DISCUSSION	205
<i>RESPIRATORY EFFECTS</i> Philip Witorsch, George Washington University, DC	209
DISCUSSION	220
<i>HEART DISEASE RISK IN PASSIVE SMOKERS</i> Dale Sandler, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, NC	223
DISCUSSION	231
<i>CARDIOVASCULAR EFFECTS</i> Lawrence M. Wexler, New York Medical College, NY	235
DISCUSSION	245

DR. KABAT: Thank you.

The problem of passive smoking and lung cancer has provoked a good deal of debate both on a scientific and on a public policy level. Do the studies that purport to show an association of exposure to environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) and lung cancer occurring in lifetime nonsmokers provide adequate evidence to resolve the issue? As Nancy Haley has just shown, she and her colleagues are very good at measuring recent exposure to ETS using cotinine measured in saliva, serum, and urine. Unfortunately, these biomarkers are not helpful for assessing exposure over the several decades relevant to the induction of lung cancer. Given the lack of a biomarker for long-term exposure to ETS, epidemiologic studies have had to rely on self-reports or proxy-reports of ETS exposure.

I propose to raise what I consider to be some of the key aspects of the roughly 15 epidemiologic studies of the issue of ETS and lung cancer and to point out certain areas that require further study. I will briefly refer to our own study which is still in progress at the American Health Foundation. Finally, I will suggest a possible direction for further study of this issue.

## EPIDEMIOLOGIC STUDIES

Table 1 lists studies examining the lung cancer risk of non-smoking wives of smoking husbands compared to the non-smoking wives of non-smoking husbands. One notes that the greatest magnitude of the overall relative risk (RR) is 2.1. After the Trichopoulos and Correa studies, the highest RR is 1.65 (Lam et al.). The national Research Council's committee on passive smoking carried out a meta-analysis of the existing studies in 1986 and came up with an overall RR of 1.34 (95% confidence interval: 1.18-1.53) (1).

In four out of the fifteen studies listed, the overall RR is statistically significant. When one examines the data by level of exposure, i.e., number of cigarettes per day smoked by the husband stratified into two or more levels, 8 of the 15 studies show evidence of a dose-response relationship.

## HISTOLOGY

When we look at the effect of ETS exposure by histologic type, we see an interesting discrepancy (Table 2). Dalager et al. (2) and Pershagen et al. (3) show roughly comparably elevated odds ratios (OR) for squamous cell and small cell carcinomas combined, but not for adenocarcinoma. In contrast, Lam et al. (4) obtained a significant effect for adenocarcinoma but not for squamous cell carcinoma.

The results of Hirayama's study (5) presumably agree on this point with those of Lam et al., since the majority of his lung cancer cases were apparently adenocarcinoma. Trichopoulos et al. results (6) presumably weigh in on the side of Dalager et al. and Pershagen et al., since Trichopoulos excluded adenocarcinoma and terminal bronchial carcinoma from their series.

Since adenocarcinoma occurs more commonly in never smokers than in smokers and generally more commonly in women than in men (7), one would expect that if ETS exposure is an appreciable risk factor for lung cancer, it is associated with adenocarcinoma, as well as possibly with other types. The inconsistency in the results to date regarding histology indicates that this is one area that merits further study.

## ASSESSMENT OF DISEASE STATUS

Misclassification on disease status occurs when diagnoses other than primary carcinoma of the lung are included in the case series or when a primary cancer of the lung is included among the controls due to its having gone undetected. Garfinkel et al. reported that of 283 women listed as having lung cancer in hospital records but with no mention of their having smoked, 36 (12.7%) turned out to have diagnoses other than lung cancer when the histology was reviewed by one of the authors (8).

In studies in which histologic verification of lung cancer is a criterion for inclusion in the study, misclassification should be minimal. However, some of the studies listed in Table 1 were lacking this for all cases.

It should also be mentioned that even when lung cancer is histologically verified, it is possible that some cases judged to be primary cancer of the lung are actually secondary to a cancer of another site that has gone undetected.

## ASSESSMENT OF EXPOSURE STATUS

This is a greater problem than assessment of disease status, and for some investigators it is the key problem of epidemiologic studies of ETS and lung cancer (9,10).

Misclassification of exposure status can occur in a number of ways. First, subjects who have smoked for some period of their life can be erroneously included in a study of never smokers. Second, subjects may under-report (minimize) or over-report (inflate) their ETS exposure, or this may be done by proxies. A third type of misclassification can occur when some indirect measure (such as whether the subject is married to a smoker or how much the spouse smokes) is used as an indicator of ETS exposure. The effect of misclassification on the estimate of the RR depends on whether the misclassification is random or differential (that is systematic). Random misclassification will bias the estimate of the RR toward the null, thus making an effect, if there is one, more difficult to detect. If misclassification on exposure differs between cases and controls, the estimate of the RR can be biased either upwards or downwards depending on the direction of the bias (11).

### *Misclassification of active smokers as never smokers.*

Garfinkel and co-workers found that among lung cancer cases identified as "nonsmokers" or lacking any mention of smoking in the hospital record, 40% were revealed to have smoked upon reinterview (8). Although a detailed personal interview yields more accurate smoking histories than reliance on hospital charts, it is still likely that, even when subjects are directly interviewed and more so when various proxies are used, some misclassification of smokers as nonsmokers occurs.

Lee has argued that random misclassification of smokers as non-smokers coupled with a tendency of smokers to marry smokers could account for the observed association of a spouse's smoking and increased lung cancer risk in non-smoking spouses (9). Assuming a 5% misclassification of smoking subjects, a RR of 20 for active smoking, no true effect of passive smoking, and a between-spouse smoking concordance of 3.45, Lee demonstrates the effects of such a bias. These include an apparent effect of passive smoking (RR = 1.75) and the creation of a large proportion of true smokers among the self-reported non-smokers with lung cancer.

### *Misclassification of self-reported ETS exposure.*

A study by Pron et al. (12) suggests that misclassification of self-reported ETS exposure may be extensive. They examined the reliability of responses in 117 control subjects who had participated in a study of passive smoking and who were reinterviewed on average six months later. Responses to an initial question about exposure to ETS (yes/no) were more reliable for exposure at home than at work (Table 3). Reproducibility of questions concerning exposure to a spouse's smoke (yes/no) was high for both sexes, with the reliability being generally lower for other family members. Quantitative measures of ETS exposure, i.e., number and duration of exposures, were generally less reliable than qualitative (or dichotomous) measures. In general, non-smokers gave more reliable information on all parameters of ETS exposure than smokers.

Unfortunately the study by Pron et al, did not examine the reliability of responses among cases as well as among controls. In case-control studies particularly one must be concerned that the case's reporting of exposure may be influenced by his diagnosis. In a study of lung cancer occurring in non-smokers, this could take the form of cases probing past exposures more intensively than controls and over-reporting exposures to ETS, since some cases may feel compelled to find an explanation for their disease. On the other hand, it is also possible that cases might minimize their exposures out of an unwillingness to blame a spouse.

### *Misclassification due to use the spouse's smoking habits.*

Using the presence of a smoking spouse as an indicator of ETS exposure can lead to serious misclassification of exposure. Based on a survey of nearly 38,000 never- and ex-smokers, Friedman et al. (13) reported that the sensitivity and specificity of using the presence of a smoking spouse as a predictor of actual ETS exposure were quite poor. Thirty-nine percent of men and 47% of women married to smokers reported zero hours of exposure at home. Conversely, 49% of men and 41% of women married to non-smokers reported some ETS exposure.

## CONFOUNDING

Confounding is another major problem area for the evaluation of epidemiologic studies of ETS and lung cancer and one that has received relatively little attention.

Several studies suggest that a variety of factors could act as confounders of an ETS-lung cancer association. Friedman (13) found that age bore a strong negative relationship to reported ETS exposure. Hours per week of ETS exposure were associated with alcohol consumption, marijuana use, being currently unmarried, and, in a U-shaped fashion, with "no college education."

Koo, Ho, and Rylander (14) examined a wide variety of behaviors of the non-smoking wives of smoking and non-smoking husbands in Hong Kong. They concluded that in general wives with husbands who had never smoked had healthier lifestyles than wives with smoking husbands. Specifically, the former were of higher socioeconomic status, were more conscientious housewives, ate better diets, and had higher indices of family cohesiveness as well as better health status.

A third study, by Sidney et al. (15) reported that dietary B-carotene intake was significantly lower in non-smokers exposed to passive smoke at home than in non-smokers who were not exposed, after adjustment for age, sex, race, education status, body weight, and alcohol intake.

They concluded that dietary B-carotene intake was a potential confounder of the relationship between ETS and lung cancer.

Other potential confounders included: occupation, domestic radon exposure, a history of exposure to therapeutic x-rays, and keeping pet birds in the home. This last is raised by a recent study from the Netherlands which found that the odds ratio for lung cancer among people who kept pet birds in their home was 6.7 (95% confidence interval 2.2-20.0) after adjustment for active smoking and vitamin C intake (16). This study did not assess ETS exposure among the subjects.

#### THE AMERICAN HEALTH FOUNDATION STUDY

Since 1983, a study of ETS and lung cancer in never smokers has been in progress at the American Health Foundation. All lung cancer cases interviewed in the context of a large, multi-center study of tobacco-related diseases who report never having smoked more than one cigarette per day for a year are given a detailed ETS questionnaire.

For each case, 2-3 hospitalized controls who have diagnoses not known to be associated with tobacco use and who are also lifetime non-smokers are interviewed. Controls are matched to cases on age (+/- 5 years), sex, race, hospital, and date of interview (within 3 months).

The items in the questionnaire include exposure in utero; in childhood (specific family members who smoked, years of exposure and average number of hours of exposure per day, and a subjective rating of the intensity of exposure), in adulthood at home (specific family members who smoke(d), number of cpd smoked by each, years of exposure, number of hours per day, subjective rating of exposure, and where a spouse smoked, whether he or she smoked in the bedroom); in the workplace (number of hours per week, years of exposure, number of smokers within ten feet of subject, rating of exposure) for up to four different jobs; and in various forms of transportation and in social situations.

In addition to ETS questions, information is obtained on demographic factors, occupation, alcohol consumption, medical history, diet, and other factors. To date, this study has accrued a total of 90 lung cancer cases and 247 matched controls. We plan to continue recruiting subjects for the study in order to reach a sample size of 150 cases. Table 4 gives a breakdown of the histology of lung cancer by sex.

Preliminary analyses of the data do not indicate any striking ETS exposure differences between cases and controls. Tables 5 and 6 give crude odds ratios and confidence intervals for overall exposure in childhood, adulthood at home, and in the workplace, in males and females, respectively. With the possible exception of exposure in childhood and among women, there is little suggestion of excess risk due to ETS. A fuller analysis of these data, including adjustment for covariates, is in progress.

#### CONCLUSION

Epidemiologic studies of ETS and lung cancer generally suffer from small sample size. Given the small magnitude of the observed RR associated with passive smoking and the problems associated with multiple histologic types bias, misclassification, and confounding, increasing the sample size is one way to attempt to answer the ETS-lung cancer question with greater certainty. A case-control study of 10,000 lung cancer cases (7,500 males and 2,500 females) could be expected to

yield approximately 150 male and 250 female never smokers, based on estimates of the frequency of lung cancer among never smokers (2% for males and 10% for females [7]). Table 7 shows the sample sizes necessary in each group (assuming equal numbers of cases and controls) to detect RRs between 1.25 and 2.00, with a one-tailed alpha of 5% and 80% power, given various proportions of exposed controls.

While it is highly unlikely that such a study would be funded solely to assess the effects of ETS exposure, the study could be designed to make an important contribution to the radon-lung cancer issue as well. Specifically, studies of domestic radon exposure have also suffered from small sample sizes and have produced variable and unstable estimates of the risk of radon exposure in never smokers. In addition, there is a need to better assess the interactive effects of active smoking and radon exposure. Since ETS and radon exposure are both risk factors for lung cancer, and since one may confound, or interact with, the other, a large study designed to measure both factors as reliably as possible would have considerable scientific merit.

Table 1

Epidemiologic Studies

<u>Prospective Studies</u>	<u>Relative Risk</u>	<u>95%</u>	<u>C.I.</u>
Hirayama (1981)	1.63	1.25 -	2.11
Garfinkel (1981)	1.18	0.90 -	1.54
<u>Case-Control Studies</u>			
Trichopoulos, et al. (1981)	2.1	1.18 -	3.78
Chan & Fung (1982)	0.75	0.44 -	1.30
Correa, et al. (1983)	2.03	0.83 -	5.03
Koo, et al. (1983)	1.54	0.90 -	2.64
Kabat & Wynder (1984)	0.79	0.26 -	2.43
Wu, et al. (1985)	1.2	0.6 -	2.5
Garfinkel, et al. (1985)	1.12	0.74 -	1.69
Lee, et al. (1985)	1.03	0.41 -	2.47
Aklba, et al. (1986)	1.48	0.88 -	2.50
Dalager, et al. (1986)	1.5	0.8 -	2.8
Pershagen, et al. (1987)	1.28	0.75 -	2.16
Lam, et al. (1987)	1.65	1.16 -	2.35
Koo, et al. (1987)	1.55	0.94 -	3.08

Table 2

Cell Type Related to Spouse's Smoking

Study	Histologic Type	N	Odds Ratio	95% C. I.
Dalager et al. (1986)	Adenocarcinoma	16	1.02*	0.33 - 3.16
	Squamous & Small Cell Ca.	14	2.88*	0.91 - 9.10
	Other	18	1.31*	0.48 - 3.57
Pershagen et al. (1987)	Squamous or Small Cell Ca.	20	3.3	1.1 - 11.4
	Other	47	0.8	0.4 - 1.5
Lam et al. (1987)	Adenocarcinoma	131	2.12	1.32 - 3.39
	Squamous Cell Ca.	27	0.85	0.35 - 2.06
	Small Cell Ca.	8	3.00	0.53 - 16.9

\* Adjusted for gender, age, and study area.

Table 3

Reproducibility of ETS Exposure Data

<i>Question</i>	<i>Kappa value</i>
Ever lived with regular smoker?	0.66
Ever exposed to smoke at work?	0.46
No. of resident smokers?	0.55
No. of job sites reported?	0.37
Duration of residential exposure?	0.45

Source: Pron et al., 1988

Table 4

Histology of Lung Cancer Among Never-Smokers

	<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>	
	N	( % )	N	( % )
Squamous & Small Cell Ca.	5	( 13.5 )	10	( 18.9 )
Adenoca.	25	( 67.6 )	26	( 49.1 )
Large Cell Ca.	5	( 13.5 )	6	( 11.3 )
BAC	1	( 2.7 )	7	( 13.2 )
Other	1	( 2.7 )	4	( 7.5 )
	37		53	

Table 5

American Health Foundation Study

Males

	<u>Cases</u>	<u>Controls</u>	<u>OR</u>	<u>95% C.I.</u>
<u>Exposed in Childhood:</u>				
No	15	36	1.00	-----
Yes	21	69	0.73	0.34 - 1.59
<u>Exposed in Adulthood- at home:</u>				
No	23	68	1.00	-----
Yes	13	32	1.20	0.54 - 2.68
<u>Exposed at Work (ever):</u>				
No	16	45	1.00	-----
Yes	21	60	0.98	0.46 - 2.10

Table 6

American Health Foundation Study

Females

	<u>Cases</u>	<u>Controls</u>	<u>OR</u>	<u>95% C.I.</u>
<u>Exposed in Childhood:</u>				
No	17	61	1.00	-----
Yes	36	77	1.68	0.86 - 3.27
<u>Exposed in Adulthood- at home:</u>				
No	18	45	1.00	-----
Yes	35	97	0.90	0.46 - 1.76
<u>Exposed at Work (ever):</u>				
No	17	43	1.00	-----
Yes	27	68	1.00	0.49 - 2.06

Table 7

Power Calculation

<u>Odds Ratio To Detect</u>	<u>Percent Controls Exposed</u>		
	<u>20%</u>	<u>40%</u>	<u>60%</u>
1.25	1616	1124	1172
1.50	419	303	329
1.75	214	161	179
2.00	134	104	119

$\alpha = .05$  (1-tailed)       $1-B=.80$        $R = 1$

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DR. GORI: Yes?

DR. LEHR: Maxwell Lehr, independent consultant. A number of risk assessments have been performed which estimate excess deaths from lung cancer due to ETS exposure. Most recently a Department of Transportation study has estimated excess deaths among cabin crew and frequent fliers. In view of the problems with the ETS epidemiology that you have alluded to, do you believe that these risk assessments are sufficiently well founded?

DR. KABAT: I would say that if they are based on the types of studies, if they are using the relative risks derived from these studies, I would say that they are pretty shaky. That would be my feeling about them.

DR. GORI: Yes?

PROF. FLEISS: I am Joseph Fleiss, New York City. Dr. Kabat showed some important power figures and sample size requirements, but one of the problems with bias is it doesn't go away with increasing sample size. It just gets stronger and stronger as sample sizes increase. One important source of bias that hasn't been adequately discussed is that caused by non-blinded evaluation, the evaluation by interviewers and examiners who know the status in a case-controlled study of the subject as case or control.

I think one of the studies by Lawrence Garfinkle, the 1985 study, attempted to keep the interviewers blinded. Very few other studies have attempted that, and why?

DR. KABAT: I can tell you that 10 years ago at the American Health Foundation it was standard procedure to keep the interviewer blinded as to whether she, in most cases, was interviewing a case or a control, a lung cancer case or a colon cancer control, say, but in modern hospitals it is relatively impractical. It is almost impossible to blind an observant interviewer because first of all, for example, oral cancer cases frequently have surgery or they have voice boxes; larynx cancer cases are two of the diagnoses that we include in our case series, and it is pretty obvious what their diagnosis is, and if you have tubes coming out of your abdomen or you have a pouch at the end of your intestine, it is, also, and in some of the hospitals, for instance, in Memorial Hospital to some extent, diagnoses are segregated by floor, so that all the breast cancer cases are on the 14 floor. This makes it virtually impossible to maintain the, it becomes a myth that you can blind an astute interviewer.

PROF. FLEISS: A follow-up question though, how about about those case-controlled studies in which it is a survivor who is being interviewed, where the case, unfortunately, has already died? So, it is a spouse who is asked about smoking history, his, as well as the patient's.

DR. KABAT: There you could keep the, as long as the proxy didn't refer to the diagnosis.

DR. GORI: In view of the talk of Dr. Rylander at the beginning where he pointed out the many possible confounders here, and the relatively small relative risk that we are seeing, is it really possible, in your opinion to come up with something definite about who is the culprit in what we see here?

DR. KABAT: I, personally, have always taken the studies with a grain salt. I think they are measuring something, but I am not quite sure what it is that they are measuring.

DR. GORI: Because usually the control for socioeconomic status, education, but, good Lord, there are so many other things that are involved here that carry risk factors of their own, apparent risk factors of their own, and we should say, "Apparent" here, quite high.

DR. KABAT: But still I think Dr. Rylander made a really good point which is that I am not advocating throwing up our hands. I think our job is to try to identify what we think are potential confounders to do more of the kinds of studies I alluded to to get a handle on what covariates we need to measure as best we can and try to see whether these relative risks are diminished; do they go away or does it have no -- do they increase, and to try to do a new generation of better studies, and the more factors we are able to measure, the more we will find out about other risk factors, too. So, there are other dividends, not just ETS.

DR. GORI: Thank you, Dr. Kabat. I am afraid we will have to, well, one more question here, Peter?

DR. LEE: I want to ask about the hospital case-controlled study. I know the American Health Foundation standard practice is to use non-smoking-related disease patients as controls. I mean, but you are studying ETS and in theory one ought to use non-ETS-related diseases as controls. Now, there is evidence which I don't actually believe is valid myself that there is some evidence showing that some cancers are related to ETS that are not related to active smoking.

Do you consider you should exclude these diseases from your control population or that one takes the view that it is impossible, really, that any disease actually could be due to ETS that is not associated with active smoking?

DR. KABAT: Again, I don't think any of us knows the answer to that question, but personally, I think the existing evidence incriminating ETS as a risk factor for breast cancer is fairly weak, and we would have the ability to remove certain -- we have a tremendously varied control group. We have tens of thousands of controls which we can, from which we can exclude certain diagnoses and see whether this makes a difference.

DR. GORI: Thank you, Dr. Kabat.

The time has come. You reckless people go out there and drink your dangerous infusions of xanthines, load up your HDL's with fearsome Danishes and don't forget the last study that shows that milk gives an elevated risk of lung cancer, as well.

(Brief recess.)

DR. GORI: Welcome back. We really need to conserve time here because we have a tight schedule this morning. The next speaker doesn't need introduction, really. He is Larry Garfinkel, a distinguished epidemiologist, vice president for epidemiology and research at the American Cancer Society.

Larry, it is your turn.