Does Tobacco Smoke Kill, Cripple or Just Pacify?

Panel of Experts Will Launch Exhaustive Study

EDITOR'S NOTE — Three years ago the U. S. Public Health Service advised Americans that the surest way to avoid lung cancer was to quit smoking. This added new fuel to an already-raging tobacco vs. cancer controversy. The Surgeon General has now decided to appoint a panel of eminent scientists to determine whether the original statement should be reaffirmed, modified, or completely withdrawn. Vital health and economic issues hinge on the outcome.

By DAVID D. LEWIS
Of the United Press International

WASHINGTON — The chief government guardian of national health is about to jump into one of the medical profession's long unsettled debates—the controversy over whether tobacco smoke kills, cripples or just pacifies humans.

Surgeon General Luther L. Terry of the U. S. Public Health Service (PHS) is expected to name very soon an expert panel to make a full investigation of all previous data concerning the relationship of smoking to health problems, including whether it causes lung cancer.

He has said the group also will look at other possible health hazards such as automobile exhaust, industrial smog and other air pollutants.

When the new findings are analyzed, this panel, or a new one, will make recommendations. Then it will be up to Doctor Terry to decide what action, if any, is warranted.

Unbiased Panel

The Surgeon General himself will head the study which is being financed by the federal government. The other 11 panel members will represent the whole spectrum of the scientific fields involved.

Billed as "unbiased," the panel will be selected from among more than 150 eminent scientists. By mid-October, 10 of the 11 had been chosen, although it had been expected the group would be at work on the initial six-month phase a month earlier.

One PHS official helping to coordinate the selections says "These people had to be like Caesar's wife — pure beyond doubt in their lack of bias or any prejudiced notions of the relation of smoking to health. At least, if they had such notions, they must have kept them quiet."

Before invitations to serve on the panel were issued, interested parties were allowed to "veto" any candidate for "any reason whatever," the official said.

Opinions Gathered

Opinions of candidate qualifications were solicited from the Tobacco Institute, Inc.; American Cancer Society, American Heart Assn., American Medical Assn., American College of Chest Surgeons, the National Tuberculosis Assn., the Food and Drug Administration, the Federal Trade Commission, and President Kennedy's Office of Science and Technology.

First phase of the study will investigate "the nature and magnitude of the health hazard." It will be a purely scientific review of available data and probably will include public hearings. From this will be distilled a philosophy on the smoking-health problem attested to by the collective professional reputation of the experts.

The second phase — perhaps carried out by a different group and likely to include representatives of the President's committee, the FDA and FTC—will seek to chart a course for the government, the public, the tobacco industry and the medical profession.

The problem is fraught with political, economic and social implications, as well as its obvious implications to the nation's health. Such statistics as these indicate the breadth of the issue:

- There are an estimated 70 million to 100 million tobacco users in the United States. Some experts assert that 75 per cent of all American men and 50 per cent of the women are regular smokers at some time in their lives.
- The tobacco industry has an estimated annual income of more than $7.5 billion and is a heavy advertiser in the various media of communications.
- Federal and state income from tobacco taxes runs about $3 billion a year.
- The economy of six states which are top tobacco producers is materially affected by the industry. These are Georgia Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. Fifteen other states are involved as lesser producers.
- 17 million Americans depend on tobacco for all or part of their livelihood, including 800,000 farm families in the 21 producing states.
- Tobacco is the nation's fourth largest agricultural crop.

The debate over the relative danger or benefit of tobacco to mankind has been raging for more than 400 years, from the time smoking was introduced to Western civilization by Spanish explorers of America in the early 1500s.

In a report on smoking in relation to cancer and other diseases published last March, the British Royal College of Physicians (RCP) said tobacco almost from the beginning became both very popular and very controversial.

Last month, the U. S. Agriculture Department reported cigarette sales rose 2 per cent in 1962 to an all-time high after a steady rise of 3 or 4 per cent from 1955-1961. The department estimated 1962 production at 538 billion cigarettes, up 11 billion, and 7.2 billion cigars, up about 140 million.

Other Production Off

Other tobacco production in the United States fell off, however, it said. Pipe tobacco production dropped 3 million pounds to 71 million pounds; chewing tobacco fell to a new low of 64.5 million pounds, down about one per cent; and snuff production hit a 47-year low at about 32.8 million pounds, down 3 per cent.

Agriculture officials hedged on whether tobacco production would increase again next year. They said a rise seemed likely in 1963 but that the revival of the debate over the impact of smoking on health might affect the market.

Long as the controversy has been underway it has not been until fairly recent years that the U. S. government has stepped in as a debater.

Five years ago, then Surgeon General Leroy E. Burney said "The Public Health Service feels the weight of the evidence is increasingly pointing in one direction: That excessive smoking is one of the causative factors in lung cancer."

Two years later, in a special report on the smoking-health situation in November, 1959, Burney issued a series of statements which the PHS believed "justified by studies to date." These 1959 statements were:

- The weight of evidence at present implicates smoking as the principal etiological factor in the increased incidence of lung cancer.
- Cigarette smoking particularly is associated with an increased chance of developing lung cancer.
- Stopping cigarette smoking even after long exposure is beneficial.
- No method of treating tobacco or filtering the smoke has been demonstrated to be effective in materially reducing or eliminating the hazard of lung cancer.
- The non-smoker has a lower incidence of lung cancer than the smoker in all controlled studies, whether analyzed in terms of rural areas, urban regions, industrial occupations or sex.
- Persons who have never smoked at all (cigarettes, cigars or pipe) have the best chance of escaping lung cancer.
- Unless the use of tobacco can be made safe, the individual person's risk of lung cancer can best be reduced by the elimination of smoking.

Dr. James Hundley, assistant surgeon general for plans, said recently that the PHS stood by the 1959 statements and would do so until new findings are developed.

Last April, however, a PHS official said, Surgeon General Terry gave former Health, Education and Welfare Secretary Abraham A. Ribicoff a re-evaluation of the Burney report. The official said this re-evaluation—never made public—was based on new evidence, including the British Royal College report, the decision of Denmark and Italy to ban cigarette advertisements, and other reports by scientists.

Sen. Maurine Neuberger, D-Ore., Sen. Frank E. Moss, D-Utah, and a number of co-sponsors have introduced a bill which would create a presidential commission to do generally the same job as the Surgeon General's panel is intended to accomplish.

Numerous studies in recent years have added or detracted from the weight of evidence supporting a smoking-cancer link or a relationship to other disorders, including heart disease and respiratory ailments.

Among the most recent pronouncements pro and con were these:

- Dr. Warren H. Cole, former president of the American Cancer Society, said on Sept. 23 at Chicago that 24 studies made since 1950 found "there is a very sharp relationship between cigarette smoking and cancer of the lungs." He predicted most lung cancer would be eliminated "within 20 years" if people stopped smoking cigarettes.
- The Tobacco Institue replied from New York with a statement that "Repetition does not alter the fact that medical science does not know the cause . . . of lung cancer. If Doctor Cole knows what will happen in the field of cancer 20 years from now, he apparently has information not generally available."
- A group of researchers wrote in the Journal of the American Medical Association on Sept. 24 that filtered cigarette smoke yielded only one-third the amount of tar in standard cigarette smoke but still enough to cause cancer in some mice. They said each of six brands they studied induced tumors in the mice and some of the tumors became cancerous.
- The Tobacco Industry Research Committee (TIRC) chairman, T. V. Hartnett, replied to the filter-tip report that "Scientists advise us it is important to note that cancers have been produced in laboratory animals with a number of harmless, everyday substances, including glucose, eggs and medicinal skin creams. It is apparent that animal skin painting is not directly relevant to the problem of human cancer, particularly lung cancer."

Against this backdrop of controversy, the carefully chosen scientific panel, guided by the nation's chief health officer—the Surgeon General — will search for new insight into the age-old tobacco-health debate.

Parents Sue Drug Firm

NEW YORK (AP)—The Long Island parents of twins have begun a $2.2-million law suit against a German pharmaceutical firm, claiming their children were born deformed because the mother took some of the sedative drug thalidomide while pregnant.

Tuck Harvey, 26, claimed in an affidavit that his son Noren was born with defective, deformed and shortened arms and his daughter Bivenne, suffered internal deformities and a malformed thumb.

The husband said his wife used the drug after it was prescribed by her physician to help overcome insomnia while pregnant.

The twins were born at North Shore Hospital, Manhasset, N. Y., May 18, 1961.

Liquor Sales Gain

OLYMPIA (UPI) — The State Liquor Control Board reports that gross liquor sales totaled $7,797,097 last month compared with $7,692,166 during September, 1961.

Record Enrollment

McMINNVILLE (UPI) — Linfield's record-breaking enrollment has reached 1,013.

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