

# HEALTH

## Second Hand Smoke: Some Grim News

*New Studies Suggest it's a  
Leading Cause of Death*

There's no denying that cigarettes are a lethal addiction: smoking kills more than six times as many Americans every year as died in the entire Vietnam War. But secondhand smoke remains a source of bitter contention. Is it really a public health hazard, as the antismoking forces contend? Or is it just an annoyance? Four years ago, the U.S. Surgeon General's office and the National Research Council tackled the question. In separate reports, both firmly linked passive smoking to lung cancer. They also found that smokers' children suffered more than their share of respiratory infections. But neither panel tried to gauge the overall impact of passive smoking on the nation's health. The evidence was still too sketchy.

That was four years ago. The big picture is now becoming clearer, and two new studies suggest it's not going to be pretty. In a draft report to be released this month, the EPA will conclude that secondhand smoke is causing 3,800 lung-cancer deaths in the United States every year. If approved, the document will declare airborne tobacco smoke a "class-A carcinogen" - a substance known to cause cancer in humans. The second new study, by San Francisco heart researcher Stanton Glantz, suggests that lung cancer is only the beginning of the problem. Indeed, Glantz calculates that passive smoking causes 10 times as much heart disease as lung disease, making it the nation's third leading cause of preventable death. The only bigger killers, he says, are active smoking and alcohol abuse.

The new EPA report - based on results from 24 epidemiological studies, including 11 that weren't on hand in 1986 - could carry a lot of political weight. An accompanying "guide to workplace smoking policies" will recommend that employers create separately ventilated smoking lounges, since segregation alone offers non-smokers little protection. The EPA doesn't regulate cigarette smoke, but declaring it a known hazard could make way for tough local smoking ordinances. Already, Los Angeles City Councilman Marvin Braude has proposed an outright ban on smoking in restaurants, saying the new studies take us "way beyond the days when restaurant smoking laws were introduced just to make dining a more pleasurable experience."

The Philip Morris company, a staunch opponent of such restrictions, has launched a pre-emptive strike against the EPA report but has succeeded mainly at drawing attention to it. In a press release, the firm implies that the EPA is neglecting a Yale University

study that tends to exonerate passive smoking. Though that study, an unpublished 1987 Ph.D. dissertation, suggested that previous research may have overestimated the danger, it actually supported "the existence of a small-to-moderate effect of passive smoking on lung-cancer risks." And as Philip Morris concedes, the results were not in a form that could be integrated into the EPA's data pool.

The dissertation relied on data from a research project run by Yale epidemiologist Dwight Janerich, but it wasn't the last word on the project. In a new paper, summarized in the printed program of a recent cancer conference, Janerich reported that the risk of lung cancer nearly doubled in subjects who were exposed to a given quantity of secondhand smoke during early life. By estimating the number of people so exposed and applying the risk factor, Janerich deduced that passive smoking may be responsible for 20 percent of all lung cancer in nonsmokers. That's a slightly higher estimate than the EPA came up with. Philip Morris spokesman Thomas Borelli speculates that Janerich "tortured the data" until it said what he wanted to hear.

Heart disease: Lung cancer aside, the accumulating evidence on heart disease should give the industry pause. By pooling and analyzing the results of 11 recent studies, Stanton Glantz and his collaborator, Dr. William Parmley, showed that living with a smoker has roughly the same effect on heart-disease mortality than it has on lung cancer mortality: both rise by about 30 percent in the nonsmoker. But because heart disease is 10 times prevalent as lung cancer, the same risk factor yields 30,000 to 40,000 annual deaths. Combining that toll with 3,000 to 4,000 lung-cancer deaths, and factoring in an estimated 10,000 deaths from nonlung cancers caused by passive smoking, Glantz gets a grand total of about 50,000 deaths. In short, one nonsmoker dies for every eight smokers.

Glantz is not the first scientist to reach this startling conclusion; another researcher, Judson Wells, published similar figures in 1988. But Glantz's paper is the most comprehensive review to date, and it goes beyond epidemiology to describe the mechanisms by which secondhand smoke might affect the heart. Viewed as a whole, he says, "the evidence on heart disease is stronger today than the evidence on lung cancer was in 1986." One shudders to think what the next round of studies will show.

- Courtesy of Newsweek

## Parent's Smoke Gets Into Kid's Blood

Kids who are regularly exposed to a parent's cigarette smoke may have an increased risk of developing heart disease as a young adult. This is according to a study done by researchers at the Medical College of Virginia Hospitals.

Should parents stop smoking around their children? "Yes!" says William B. Moskowitz, M.D., a pediatric cardiologist who led the research team.

Over two-hundred families with 11-year-old twins were studied; in half the families at least one parent smoked.

The researchers found that children who were regularly exposed to one (or both) parent's smoke had lower levels of HDL ("good cholesterol") in their blood.

The researchers also found that the red blood cells of

children regularly exposed to cigarette smoke were less able to carry oxygen to the tissues.

The blood of children whose parents smoked also contained two toxic chemicals: cotinine, a byproduct of nicotine; and elevated levels of thiocyanate, a byproduct of the cyanide present in cigarette smoke. *Source: The American Heart Association's Journal, Circulation, Vol. 81, No. 2*



## Passive smoke and heart disease linked

NEW YORK - Other people's smoke is a proven cause of heart disease in non-smokers, raising their risk of dying from the disease by up to 30 percent, a study says.

In a presentation in Boston at the World Conference on Lung Health, Stanton Glantz of the University of California, San Francisco, said research is beginning to show exactly how cigarette smoke alters the heart, blood and arteries. He presented a study in which he reviewed others' research on the subject.

In 1986, the Surgeon General concluded in his annual report on smoking and health that so-called passive smoking causes lung cancer in non-smokers. At that time, the evidence was insufficient to link passive smoking with heart disease, the report said.

Newer studies have changed that, Glantz said Friday in a telephone interview.

"The evidence that passive smoking causes heart disease is stronger today than the evidence was in 1986 that passive smoking caused lung cancer," Glantz said.

Glantz's report comes one week after the Environmental Protection Agency said it will soon declare environmental tobacco smoke a known carcinogen.

The EPA concluded that passive smoking causes 3,000 deaths. Glantz said passive smoking also causes 32,000 heart disease deaths.

"The heart disease deaths combined with the cancer deaths make passive smoking the third leading cause of preventable death, behind smoking and alcohol," he said.

Glantz is a researcher and statistician who conducts research in cardiology, has written two textbooks on biostatistics and serves on the California State Scientific Review Panel on toxic air contaminants.

His collaborator in the study was Dr. William Parmley, a cardiologist, chief of the division of cardiology at University of California, San Francisco, and a past president of the American College of Cardiology.

The Tobacco Institute, which represents cigarette makers, emphasized that the Surgeon General in 1986 had failed to find proof that passive smoking causes heart disease.

"There have been only three studies since then, and they continue to support the conclusions," Brennan Dawson, a spokeswoman for the institute, said in a telephone interview Friday.

- Courtesy of The East Oregonian

## \$1,000,000,000 Up In Smoke

American teens spend over \$1 billion a year on tobacco.

60% of American smokers started smoking by the time they were 14 years old.

80% of smokers started smoking by the time they were 21.

About 20% of all American high school students are smokers.

*Source: Robert Jaffe, M.D., president of D.O.C. (Doctors Ought to Care)*