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STUDY ON DOGS AND SMOKING

HON. TIM LEE CARTER

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, August 14, 1970

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, recently, Drs. Auerbach and Hammond reported results of a smoking dog study in an effort to show the relationship between smoking and health.

The scientific methods used in this study have been questioned. The American Medical Association and the new England Journal of Medicine rejected the research papers outright.

I enclose copy of a letter to Dr. Jesse L. Steinfeld for your perusal:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, D.C., August 11, 1970.

Dr. Jesse L. STEINFELD,
The Surgeon General, U.S. Public Health Service, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D.C.

DEAR JESSE: I have received your July 10th reply to my letter to you of May 19 concerning the Auerbach-Hammond smoking dog study. As you can imagine, I was shocked, and disappointed to learn that in your letter of June 12 to the American Cancer Society you gave an unqualified endorsement to the validity of the study, based on nothing more than your hearsay reports of the findings and your own strong feelings about smoking and health. This seems to have been an irresponsible act on your part and not in keeping with the scientific objectivity which should accompany your high office. As you must have anticipated, the news bureau of the American Cancer Society promptly released your letter to the press in an attempt to bolster their position with the prestige of your office.

As I told you in my letter of May 19, serious questions about the validity of this study had been raised by a distinguished pathologist whose letter I forwarded to you. You may by now have seen the enclosed article from the Wall Street Journal of July 6. The article reports that the Journal of the American Medical Association has decided not to publish the Auerbach-Hammond papers on the basis of reviews by twelve independent authorities. The article pointed out that the number of reviewers assigned to the Auerbach-Hammond data was much greater than usual because of the controversial nature of the experiment.

When I attended the meeting of the American Medical Association in Chicago on June 22, I learned that the President of the AMA, Dr. Gerald Dorfman, had determined from a conversation with the Editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association that the independent reviewers had unanimously recommended rejection of the article. I believe that Dr. Dorfman would confirm that information if you were to inquire.

Among the things that particularly disturb me, as a physician, about your letter to the American Cancer Society is your insistence that no formal review is necessary to establish the validity of this study in view of (a) its eminent sponsorship, (b) the reputation of the investigators and (c) the fact that two scientists in government service had the opportunity to review the data and apparently agreed with the reported findings.

As to the point, it seems you have had some bad advice. At the time you wrote your letter, one of the pathologists whose opinion you relied on, Dr. Raymond Yesner of the Veterans Administration, had already become the center of controversy in connection with another research study relating to cigarette smoking. It seems that at a medical meeting Dr. Yesner took the liberty of intercepting certain data from an unpublished study originated by Dr. Alvan Feinstein of Yale. As you will see from the enclosed letter

to the Editor of the Journal of the American Medical Association, Dr. Feinstein has publicly contradicted Dr. Yesner's interpretation of that data. You might also have taken account of the fact that Dr. Yesner is employed by the Veterans Administration which was a co-sponsor of the Auerbach-Hammond study. In view of these facts, I think you will agree that your reliance on Dr. Yesner was probably ill-advised.

I think you might also agree that such considerations as the "eminent sponsorship" of the study and the "reputations" of the investigators are not proper criteria for judging validity. The American Cancer Society, as you probably know, has sponsored anti-smoking commercials featuring a movie star who was recently convicted of illegal possession of marijuana.

Moreover, the two investigators last February released their findings to the popular press before presenting them to their scientific colleagues, a procedure which is considered highly improper among scientific researchers. In fact, their action caused the authoritative New England Journal of Medicine to reject the research papers outright. I think you might have considered these facts in assessing the "reputations" of the organization and people involved.

In view of the judgment you have pronounced, the integrity of your office requires you to make every effort to determine what criticisms the Journal of the American Medical Association reviewers made of the study and to amend the comments which you made to the American Cancer Society in your letter of June 12 and to correct the erroneous impression your letter has left with the American public.

As you pointed out in your letter, your Department has the statutory responsibility of reporting to the Congress periodically on the state of scientific research concerning cigarette smoking and health. I fear that your unqualified acceptance of this research, which is to this date unpublished in any scientific journal, is a clear reflection of the superficial and biased manner in which the information which goes into those reports is evaluated. I also believe that your action in this matter casts serious doubts upon the integrity and authority of information issuing from the Public Health Service in regard to the health consequences of smoking, and that my colleagues and the American people should be so advised.

The Congress is increasingly called upon to make public policy in the face of the proliferation health controversies which are confronting the American people. We must have objective scientists to guide our actions. The American people stand to lose much more than the right to smoke cigarettes if scientific judgments are made on such a capricious basis.

I would be most pleased to have your comments on the observations I have made in this letter.

Sincerely yours,
TIM LEE CARTER.

[From the Wall Street Journal, July 8, 1970]
AMA JOURNAL DECIDES TO WITHHOLD REPORTS ON DOGS AND SMOKING—CONTROVERSIAL TESTS SUPPOSEDLY CAUSED CANCER; THE MAGAZINE SAYS ARTICLES WERE REJECTED

CHICAGO.—The Journal of the American Medical Association has decided not to publish two previously announced reports on a controversial experiment with dogs that is supposed to link cigarette smoking with lung cancer.

But the magazine, which is probably the most widely read medical journal in the U.S., insists that the articles haven't been rejected outright but simply returned for revision.

The reports have been causing controversy since early May, when the Tobacco Institute, the industry's trade association, announced it was mounting a major attack against the validity of the researchers' findings.

The articles describe the results of a 2½-year experiment on 94 pedigree beagle dogs that was carried out by two eminent scientists. The American Cancer Society has claimed that the experiment was significant in at least two ways: It produced lung cancer as a result of cigarette smoking in a signif-

icantly large experimental animal, and it marked the first time that cancer had been induced in laboratory animals by causing them to inhale tobacco smoke.

REJECTION IS DENIED

Dr. Hugh H. Hussey, editor of the medical publication, denied in an interview that the articles had been rejected for publication. "They are not acceptable for publication in their present form," he said. The articles have been returned to their authors, he said, for "extensive revision."

The two scientists who carried out the experiment are Dr. E. Cuyler Hammond, a vice president of the American Cancer Society, and Dr. Oscar Auerbach, senior medical investigator for the Veterans Administration Hospital, East Orange, N.J.

In telephone interviews yesterday, both Dr. Hammond and Dr. Auerbach declined to criticize the medical journal for returning their articles. "We sent the articles to them in good faith, and we believe the American Medical Association also acts in good faith," said Dr. Auerbach.

Neither Dr. Hussey nor the two researchers would disclose details of the suggested changes. But Dr. Hammond said some of the objections centered on photographs accompanying the text. "There were complaints that the pictures were out of focus. But that's to be expected since the slides originally were in color but had to be printed in black and white (because) the magazine considers color pictures too expensive," he said.

REVIEWERS CALLED FAIR

Commented Dr. Auerbach: "The reviewers were as fair as they thought they could be. I may not agree with them, but it's all part of the give and take."

When the articles will appear in print is undecided. Dr. Hussey said the journal will reconsider the articles if they are resubmitted with the revisions. Or, he said, the authors may decide to submit them to another publication.

The two researchers said they haven't decided which course they will take.

Dr. Hussey rejected any suggestion of pressure on the magazine either from the tobacco industry or the American Medical Association not to publish the reports. "There was no pressure whatsoever," he said.

EXPERTS CONSULTED

The decision not to publish the articles, Dr. Hussey said, was made on the basis of reviews by about 12 independent authorities. These included an expert on veterinary medicine pathology, an expert in pulmonary disease and several pathologists. The number of reviewers, he said, was much greater than is usual for an article submitted for publication in the magazine "because of the great amount of publicity involved."

The experiment already has won the approval of the U.S. Surgeon General, who recently said it wasn't necessary to carry out a formal review of the experiment "to establish validity."

The surgeon general said in a letter to Dr. Auerbach that "if the question at issue is whether human-type lung cancer has been discovered in the lungs of dogs exposed to cigarette smoke, then the answer is yes." This finding he said, was the view of both Dr. John W. Derr, a pathologist with the National Cancer Institute, and Dr. Raymond Yesner, associate professor of pathology at Yale University School of Medicine.

Dr. Auerbach said that the medical journal reviewers didn't dispute the claim that the tumors found in the dogs were of human type.

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IMPACT WAS FORECAST

When the results of the experiment were first reported at a meeting of the American Cancer Society last February, a society spokesman said the experiment "should have a significant impact on the smoking of cigarettes in this country and will probably lead to a reassessment of advertising claims and policies of the cigaret industry."

A few weeks later the Tobacco Institute replied by challenging the Cancer Society to release the unpublished data on lung cancer in dogs for further scrutiny by "men of outstanding competence and integrity."

An institute spokesman said the "Tobacco Institute does not, and the public should not, accept at a face value the findings of this study."

[From JAMA, July 6, 1970]

SMOKING AND CANCER MORPHOLOGY

To the Editor: Having initiated the study of cigarette smoking and histologic morphology in patients with lung cancer that was "reported" in THE JOURNAL (711:2031, 1970), I regret its premature publication in your MEDICAL NEWS section.

Your report was based on material presented at the recent meeting of the American Association of Pathologists and Bacteriologists by Dr. Raymond Yesner who collaborated in this project and recorded many of the histologic findings. The results presented at that meeting were based on a preliminary analysis of the data, and they contain only Dr. Yesner's interpretations of those data.

The final report may show differences in the percentages because new statistical tabulations have been necessitated by a recent change in the criteria used for consolidation of histologic categories. Even if the percentages remain unchanged, however, I disagree with the interpretation that heavier smoking caused greater degrees of malignancy in lung cancer. The "base population" in this study consisted not of a general group of smokers and nonsmokers, but of people who already had lung cancer. Consequently, no causal inferences can be drawn about the role of smoking and creating either lung cancer or different cell types of cancer in a general population of smokers and nonsmokers. Furthermore, although increased rates of smoking were associated with increased rates of undifferentiated small cell cancers, such cancers were not found to be the most clinically "malignant" tumors in the patients we studied.

My own interpretation of the preliminary data is that they contradict a long-standing belief the pathogenesis of lung cancer. Although epidermoid carcinoma is generally regarded as exclusively a "cigarette smoker's cancer," four of the 42 people currently classified in our survey as having this type of cancer had not smoked cigarettes, and the rate of epidermoid carcinoma did not show an increase in association with increased amounts of smoking in the 449 patients we studied.

I apologize to any readers who assumed I had approved the contents of your report because they saw my name there, and I urge them to await formal publication of the complete results before drawing any conclusions.

ALVAN R. FURSTHEIN, M.D.
NEW HEAVEN, CONN.

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