CORRESPONDENCE

Defamatory article by Martin Walker

In its March/April issue of 1998, the Ecologist magazine carried an article by Martin Walker which attributed to me bizarre beliefs about the causes of cancer that I do not hold and impugned my scientific inde-

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Correspondence, Book Review, Notice

Guidelines on good publication practice

I was interested to read the excellent COPE Report paper and note the intention of Occupational and Environmental Medicine to follow these guidelines.

In particular, from the occupational health point of view, I welcome the inclusion of involvement of the study participants in consideration and agreement of the research protocol, although I am a little sad that the COPE Group have restricted their consideration of prepublication information of the results to "patients, especially if there are clinical implications".

As you are aware, the professional guidance on ethics for occupational physicians now includes a specific section on occupational health research which highlights the need to consider results, including publication briefings to workforces who are the subjects of such research. I know that the BMJ Group have long been in support of this sort of ethical stance, and would hope that in the future COPE might expand their consideration of prepublication information beyond patients and clinical medicine into workers in the occupational setting.

Another area of ethics of research relevant to occupational health not considered by COPE is the field of data access and shared data. Research in the workplace can be consented to by the workforce for a specific purpose, specific protocol, and even on occasions for the use of a specific researcher.

There remains the question whether these data once obtained are or should be, available for others to use in other protocols for other purposes. Certainly in the nuclear industry, we have taken the view that it should not, without revisiting the consent of the workforce. Perhaps this too is an area that COPE might consider in the future.

C J KALMAN
British Nuclear Fuels, Fuel Business Group, Springfields, Salford Preston, Lancashire PR4 0JX, UK
cjk3@bnf.com


BOOK REVIEW

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It is difficult to think that it is 30 years since the first edition of Respiratory medicine by Crofton and Douglas was published. It was the first comprehensive textbook of respiratory medicine in the United Kingdom and every respiratory physician had a well thumbed copy. The editorialship moved to the present editors and the fifth edition has just been published in two volumes. The editors for the first time have invited some of their colleagues to write specific chapters.

Crofton and Douglas have always been characterised by beautiful, lucid writing and this continues to be an outstanding feature, supported by many attractively presented figures, radiographs, and line drawings. Reading this book is a real pleasure. A second major strength is the very balanced perspective it provides. The authors are skilled at separating the genuinely important from more transient fashionable fads and the writing is proportional to the requirements of the reader, and the importance of the topic. The book is clearly focused on the needs of patients and the need to prevent disease when possible. It includes some hard hitting comments on political and social aspects such as the moral cigarette industry and the way in which complacency in the treatment of tuberculosis has led to multidrug resistance.

As with any good textbook there is something for everyone. Simple but important facts such as how to measure and interpret the response to a Heaf test are explained clearly and not assumed. On the other hand the book is an invaluable reference source. If you want to look up, as I did, the evidence for benefit from pneumococcal vaccination, there is an excellent state of the art review. Subjects such as air pollution that are particular interests of the authors are covered superbly as expected.

Are there any deficiencies? Very few as far as I can see. As readers are particularly likely to turn to a textbook when faced with a patient with a rare disease I looked up two in particular and these were perhaps covered less well than the more common diseases.

The section on Langerhans' cell histiocytosis made little of its very close association with smoking—an important point both for diagnosis and management, and the reader may well be confused, as I was, by the headings relating to lymphangioleiomyomatosis (and lymphangioleiomyoma). A new, long chapter on lung disease could be a useful resource, particularly for drugs that are used relatively infrequently. It may not, however, do justice to complicated problems such as the long term effects of inhaled corticosteroids. These are very small criticisms in a book which is masterly by any standard.

To edit a comprehensive textbook that is also a pleasure to read requires knowledge, skill, experience, and wisdom. Respiratory medicine is extremely fortunate to have such an excellent book and our patients will be the beneficiaries. This book is an absolute necessity for anyone working in the area of respiratory medicine. Sadly, Leitch is not alive to enjoy the success of this edition.

A E TATTERSFIELD


Medichem—the international scientific association for occupational and environmental health in the chemical industry in cooperation with the Czech Society of Occupational Medicine of the Czech Medical Association of J E Purkyne and the Section of Toxicology of the Czech Society of Experimental and Clinical Pharmacology and Toxicology of the Czech Medical Association of J E Purkyne are pleased to invite you to take part in the Medichem 2001 Congress.

The Congress will provide a forum for the exchange of ideas among occupational health physicians working in the chemical industry, as well as other occupational health specialists such as hygienists, toxicologists, epidemiologists, safety officers, occupational health nurses, and others engaged in the field.

Topics
Risk assessment of chemicals: the role of epidemiological methods
Biomonitoring of exposure to chemical carcinogens
Modern management of occupational health, safety, and environmental protection
Allergens and sensitizers
Endocrine disruptors
Session on other current issues

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Defamatory article by Martin Walker

SIR RICHARD DOLL

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