CORRESPONDENCE

Incidence of leukaemia and brain tumours in some "electrical occupations"

Sir,—Törnqvist *et al* (1991;48:597-603) correctly state that most epidemiological studies on "electrical occupations" have been criticised for the lack of information about exposure to magnetic fields as well as to other potential carcinogens. They seek to remedy this fault by incorporating magnetic field measurements in their study, but their interpretation of the exposure data presented in table 4 is not justified by the quality of their data. There seem to be several potential problems with these data.

Firstly, it appears that the exposure measurements for different occupations were made with different instruments. This should have been considered in the discussion, and might also have been indicated in table 4, for the reader's convenience.

A second, and more important, difficulty with the data also emerges from table 4. This table shows 50 measurements from nine distinct occupations in eight industries, collected with different measuring devices, and over different averaging times. The six median magnetic field values presented for six railway workers are a particularly egregious example. They incorporate three different types of data: two median values of respectively eight and six spot measurements, two half shift measurements, and two roughly 18 hour measurements. From this information the authors conclude that railway workers are "most likely a homogeneous group" with regard to exposures to magnetic fields. Given differences in methods of measurement and the lack of repeated measurements on individual workers with which to characterise sources of variance, however, this conclusion cannot be justified by the data.

Although epidemiological studies are often improved by quantitative exposure measurements, studies that lack such data may have at least one advantage. Their deficiencies are readily apparent, making it somewhat

less likely that the reader will be misled.

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The authors' reply

Sir,—Given the notorious lack of exposure information in most studies on "electrical occupations" and cancer, including our own previous studies we believe that our data do provide some new information. We also trust that the reader will have no difficulties in understanding the limitations of such data.

NOTICES

First International Conference on Occupational Hygiene, Brussels, Belgium, 7-9 December 1992.

The First International Scientific Conference of the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA), will include plenary sessions with keynote speakers on occupational hygiene developments worldwide, the past, present, and future practice of setting occupational exposure standards, and health effects of biological agents. It will also include parallel sessions with papers on risk assessment for environmental pollution; exposure standards; special issues; challenges at the frontiers of occupational hygiene, and methods and strategies of prevention and control. For further information contact: Conference Secretariat, ECCO (European Congress Consultants and Organisers), Rue de l'Abbaye, 27a, B-1050 Brussels. Tel (322) 647 87 80; Fax (322) 640 66 97.

The 24th International Congress on Occupational Health, organised by CO 24 France under the patronage of the International Committee of Occupational Health (ICOH) will be held in Nice from 26 September to 1 October 1993

It will gather together worldwide specialists in occupational health and safety, along with many others concerned with these issues: physicians, nurses, medical assistants, hygienists, epidemiologists, ergonomists, safety engineers, business managers, managing executives, lawyers, union representatives: in short all those desiring to work jointly on the research topic:

"Occupational Health for each and everyone, everywhere"

As well as keynote addresses, presentations of papers, posters, technical exhibitions, and minisymposia, the following innovations will be offered: EUROSTARS exhibition, prepared by the 12 member States of the European Community.

COMPANIES FORUM exhibition, presenting examples of achievement in the field of occupational health and safety in several companies.

"ZIGZAG THROUGH FRANCE", a professional and cultural tour through several French provinces.

As well as English and French (the two official languages of ICOH congresses), a Spanish translation will be provided.

For further information contact Yveline Lagard, CO 24 France, "Les Miroirs", 18, avenue d'Alsace, Cedex 27, 92096 Paris La Défense, France. Tel 33 (1) 47 62 33 70; fax 33 (1) 47 62 31 53.

A major international conference bringing together leaders of medical education and health care in Europe will be held at the Royal College of Physicians in London, on 1 and 2 October 1992.

The idea for the meeting came originally from the Fellowship of Postgraduate Medicine. Subsequently organisations including the National Association of Clinical Tutors, the European Association of Internal Medicine, the United Kingdom Conference of Deans, the British Postgraduate Medical Federation, and the