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NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, D.C., FEBRUARY 14 -- Scientific evidence fails to confirm claimed effects of environmental tobacco smoke on health, a report appearing in the current issue of the European Journal of Respiratory Diseases says.

The 152-page report details conclusions reached at a major scientific symposium on environmental tobacco smoke held in Geneva, Switzerland, last year.

At the meeting, conducted by the University of Geneva, medical researchers from nine countries presented new data on the subject and reviewed existing studies. The sessions were organized by Ragnar Rylander, M.D., a researcher at Sweden's University of Gothenberg who conducted a similar symposium in 1974.

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Dr. Rylander concluded in the journal that "Available evidence demonstrates that the possible health effects of environmental tobacco smoke are not significant in comparison to the multitude of health problems facing society on a global scale."

He also observed that future research should be "considered in comparison to what can be gained from a public health point of view."

Reviewing the state of scientific knowledge about environmental tobacco smoke and health, the report says:

- Available data do not establish an increased lung cancer risk for nonsmokers from environmental tobacco smoke exposure;
- The contribution of carbon monoxide from tobacco smoke to the environment "is not important from a health point of view."
- Data on possible effects of exposure on children "are still contradictory;"
- The most prevalent reported effect of environmental tobacco smoke is in the area of personal annoyance and irritation and not chronic disease; and

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- o The average level of tobacco smoke exposure for the general population of nonsmokers is not currently known. Based on experimental data, a realistic exposure is believed to be but a fraction of a cigarette a day.

The scientists at the workshop noted that several studies claiming possible health risks from environmental tobacco smoke have been widely publicized. These include reports by Hirayama in Japan and Trichopolous in Greece in 1981 concerning lung cancer. The workshop participants concluded that reliable exposure and dose measurements were not adequately considered in those studies.

Participants from the United States included Dr. Melvin W. First, Department of Environmental Health Sciences, Harvard University; Dr. Roger A. Jenkins, Analytic Chemistry Division, Oak Ridge National Laboratory; and Dr. Michael D. Lebowitz, Division of Respiratory Sciences, University of Arizona.

Lebowitz was a co-author of the 1982 U.S. surgeon general's report chapter on ambient tobacco smoke and the nonsmoker.

The University of Geneva symposium was supported by a grant from The Tobacco Institute, an industry trade group.

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