

ASH/ Passive smoking/ Letters Editor The Sunday Telegraph

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Letters Editor
The Sunday Telegraph
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ASH
Action on Smoking
and Health

27th October 1998

Dear sir

Re: passive smoking

Once again, you reproduce the headline "Passive smoking doesn't cause lung cancer - official." The WHO passive smoking study does not justify this conclusion. We agree that the WHO study, in isolation, does not conclusively prove the link between passive smoking and cancer. However, it is a mistake to go on to say that this study shows there is *no link*. There is a world of difference between 'not proving a link' and 'proving no link'. It is like claiming that, because you are not completely satisfied that something is pure white, it must be black. In fact, the WHO study does show a probable but not definite link, and this, when taken with the many other studies and other types of evidence, strengthens the scientific consensus that passive smoking can cause lung cancer in non-smokers.

Alasdair Palmer ("When scientific fashion goes up in smoke", 25 October) still writes as if the WHO study proves there is no lung cancer risk from passive smoking and that the whole thing is a matter of scientific political correctness. The reason why "distinguished figures from the scientific and medical establishment" agree with ASH, is perhaps because the facts back us up. The Press Complaints Commission did not dispute ASH's arguments, but claimed that "the substance of the complaint by ASH has been resolved" by your recent coverage. However we believe that most readers viewing your coverage and headlines would conclude, wrongly, that the WHO study shows that passive smoking doesn't cause cancer.

The entire [complaint and PCC adjudication](#) were available on our web site within one working day of ASH receiving it. We have no intention of preventing people making their up own minds.

Yours sincerely,



Clive Bates
Director

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