

# *Environmental Cancer: Science, Not Politics*

In his Feb. 24 Leisure & Arts review of S. Robert Lichter and Stanley Rothman's book "Environmental Cancer—A Political Disease?" Michael Fumento writes:

"As Messrs. Lichter and Rothman demonstrate, this skewing of scientific reality is accomplished not just through a reporter's choice of stories and the flow of his narrative but also through his selection of "experts" to quote. Two such 'experts' are Sidney Wolfe, of the Naderite group Public Citizen, and Samuel Epstein, of the University of Chicago. They can be counted on to sound the alarm, claiming that a given man-made chemical, pollutant or device causes cancer or other health problems. That's probably why their names pop up regularly on the news. Yet 'each received a high confidence rating from fewer than one in four cancer researchers,' the authors write."

The majority of these "cancer researchers," who trivialize the cancer epidemic and the role of industrial carcinogens, are oncologists fixated on damage control (diagnosis and treatment) and basic molecular biologists, with minimal interest or expertise in the causes and prevention of cancer. Nevertheless, up to one in four of these researchers accorded to me and Dr. Wolfe, "a high confidence rating," in contrast to Mr. Fumento's accusation of our "exaggeration and scaremongering."

Also, a group of 65 authorities in public health and preventive medicine, together with past directors of three federal agencies—OSHA, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health—endorsed my February 1992 statement warning that "Age-standardized incidence rates have escalated to epidemic proportions over recent decades while the ability to treat and cure most cancers has not materially improved. Much cancer is avoidable and due to past exposure to chemical and physical carcinogens in the air, water and food and the workplace."

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