

PRESS RELEASE

CANCER PREVENTION COALITION

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BREAST CANCER DEATHS LINKED TO NUCLEAR EMISSIONS

Chicago - The Cancer Prevention Coalition (CPC) today released a report revealing a significant increase in breast cancer mortality rates among U.S. women living near nuclear facilities. Commenting on these findings, the Coalition questioned the methodology used by National Cancer Institute (NCI) scientists in a similar study.

The report, by Drs. Jay Gould and Ernest Sternglass, is based on a nationwide ecological survey of breast cancer mortality rates in 268 counties within 50 miles of five military facilities and 46 civilian nuclear power plants. From 1950 to 1989, age-adjusted cancer mortality rates rose from 24 to 26.4 deaths per 100,000 women, a 10% increase compared with a 4% increase for the nation as a whole.

For the five military plants -- Hanford (WA), Idaho (ID), Savannah River (SC), Brookhaven (NY), and Oak Ridge (TN) -- the rates of increase were even higher, from 20.7 to 29.2 deaths per 100,000 women, a 41% increase. For the seven counties within 40 miles of the Oak Ridge plant, the breast cancer mortality rates increased by 39% for women living in three downwind counties, in contrast to a 4% decrease among women living in four upwind counties. This is consistent with recently published findings of excess cancer mortality rates for both men and women living within a 100 mile radius of the Oak Ridge plant.

Based on these data, Dr. Gould concluded, "Nuclear emissions appear linked to increased breast cancer deaths among women living near these facilities. The public has not been informed of its risks."

In a 1991 Journal of the American Medical Association article, NCI scientists claimed "if...any excess cancer risk was present in U.S. counties with nuclear facilities, it was too small to be detected with the methods employed." The Gould/Sternglass study raises serious questions about the particular statistical methods by NCI in that they used inappropriate controls based on small populations that were also exposed to nuclear emissions.

CPC Chair, Dr. Samuel Epstein, stressed the importance of the questions raised by these findings and called for a Congressional investigation and also for further study of past and continuing risks associated with proximity of residents to nuclear plants.

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The Cancer Prevention Coalition is a Chicago-based, national organization of leading independent experts on cancer prevention and public health, together with citizen activists, organized labor and public interest and women's cancer groups.

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Dr. Jay M. Gould is the Director of the New York-based Radiation and Public Health Project, and a former member of the EPA Science Advisory board. He is a CPC member.

Dr. Ernest J. Sternglass is Professor Emeritus of Radiological Physics at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. He is on the Board of Directors of CPC.