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UC-4909

Commonwealth Institute of Health
in the University of Sydney

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JUL 27 1982

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12 July, 1982

Dr H.C. Lewinsohn,
The Perkin-Elmer Corporation,
Main Avenue,
Norwalk,
Connecticut 06856,
U. S. A.

Dear Hilton,

Thank you for your letter of January 27th together with the papers by Nicholson and Schneiderman. I am sorry that I have been unable to write about these before. I think Nicholson's paper is impressive although inevitably it depends on a number of uncertainties because of the lack of definite hard data on exposive levels, job histories, etc. even in exposed groups that have been studied extensively, let alone in the total group to which he extrapolates. But the results in figures 5, 6 and 7 do not surprise me greatly; they could be overestimates but not by large factor. These figures are mainly a prediction into the future based on what has already been observed. With an increasing number of mesothelianas being observed over the last 20 years it is reasonable to suppose that the increase will continue for sometime. The length of time before there is a downtown would depend on whether there was a change in the numbers exposed with time and on changes in dust levels. The main point is that the Bridbord et al estimate is shown to be far too high, and although most people in the trade never believed Bridbord's estimates it is good to have this confirmed by calculations based on reasonable assumptions, despite the uncertainties that must remain.

Incidentally Molly Newhouse and I are doing an update on the Cape group. The number of new mesothelianas since 1976 is less than we predicted in our 1976 paper. This used methods similar to Nicholson's applied just to our own group. At this stage we can't make too much of the reduced number but let us hope it continues.

I am afraid I find it difficult to get excited over Schneiderman's paper. It is so far removed from any data, and discussion of levels necessary for lifetime risks of 1 per million seems even further removed from any reasonable assessment of priorities in reducing mortality. I expect Schneiderman was working to a brief of questions and I think that WHO are keen on the 1 in a million criterion.

With best wishes.

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Yours sincerely,

X405676

G. Berry
Associate Professor of Biostatistics