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Cause of cancer tied to what you breath

GATLINBURG, Tenn. — (URI) — Cancer results entirely from environmental factors—the matter breathed by individuals—a New York University research scientist said yesterday.

And another scientist, Dr. Hans L. Falk, said that air pollutants may produce changes in lung tissues which will make it more susceptible to attack from several disease producing agents.

Both were addressing a conference on cancer-producing agents, attended by 150 scientists and sponsored by the National Cancer Institute and the Atomic Energy Commission.

Dr. Norton Nelson, of the Institute of Environmental medicine at New York University Medical Center, said that cigaret smoke is the major inhalant causing cancer.

But he said also that city dwellers are more likely to suffer from the disease than those from the country. Nelson said the best documented evidence was related to occupational exposure in chemical plants, asbestos plants and plants dealing with radioactive materials of one form or another.

"There is also evidence suggesting that the generally lower levels of exposure found in community air may be associated with an increased risk of lung cancer," Norton said.

Falk, of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, Research Triangle Park N.C., also traced lung ailments to air pollution, but said the pollutants may work in a number of ways.

Falk said that because of the increasingly general pollution of the air in urban areas, hazards originally associated with specific occupations, such as workers with asbestos fibers, nickel, beryllium and other materials have become more generalized hazards to the urban population.

Falk said that pollution from motor vehicles and cigaretes were among the more significant causes of lung disease. But he said there also were hazards from various kinds of dust in the air.

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