

****Confidential****

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TO: ✓ Chris Howson
Sushma Palmer

FROM: Henry Blackburn
John Potter

RE: Cancer Section Chapter 7

Nas / NRC

Most of the evidence is there but it doesn't hang together. There is a correctable matter of syntax and flow. It's not "pretty" to read. There is a correctable admixture of types of study and evidence that can be improved by separation of paragraphs or subtitles to delineate, for example, ecologic from individual studies that are rather freely mixed here, to a confusing extent.

There is a less correctable issue of the effectiveness of scientific criticism, of inconsistency in completeness and manner of data presentation (omitting numbers, duration of follow-up, type of study, risk ratios and significance in some reviews and including them in others).

More fundamentally, since we were not privy to the way the "cancer team" worked together to achieve consensus, one cannot have the sense, as we do for the CVD section, that this section is the product of the combined group of experts and has their full support.

Because so much of the scientific reception of the report overall depends on the Lipid-Cancer section hanging tight, we hope you and our brave leaders will expend the effort needed to improve the consistency, logic and flow of this section.

The report needs:

1. Clear separation of ecologic, analytic and metabolic evidence and the different weights that should be attached to them when drawing conclusions.
2. Systematic tabulation of analytic epidemiologic studies showing study size, risk ratios and 95% confidence intervals.
3. A consistent critique of studies and consistent summary presentation of methods, data analysis and conclusions.
4. A discussion of the fat-calorie issue - methodologically and biologically.
5. Addition of critical missing areas - fat and pancreas cancer (human); fat and colon cancer mechanisms (animal); the methodologic problem represented by biologic data from case-control studies; the place of and rationale for metabolic/ecologic studies.

And missing papers - Wu et al (colon), La Vecchia et al (colon), McMichael and Potter (Review of likely mechanisms), Nader et al (Fecal mutagenesis), among others.

6. Future research needs to include:
 - a) Methodologic studies for better quantification of dietary intake; for distinguishing caloric effects from nutrient effects; and for studying nutrient/nutrient interactions
 - b) Biologic markers of exposure
 - c) Studies on relationship between dietary factors and likely precursor lesions
7. Better writing; flow, sense of organization.

In its present form, this document will surely attract major criticism for its neglect of a systematic critical appraisal of the literature, its lack of proper weighting of different kinds of evidence, its inconsistent organization of presentation, and its lack of biologic and epidemiologic integration.

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bpc: D. Goodman
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E. Bierman
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