

23rd November, 1956.

Dear Egerton,

Thanks for your note. I am glad you have looked at my preliminary remarks.

I was familiar with Hill and Doll's several papers in the B.M.J. and had been becoming surprised at the confidence with which they were claiming to have demonstrated a causal relationship when there were so many circumstances to make one pause, e.g. at one stage they appeared to be claiming that smoking could be a cause of the great increase of lung cancer which this country has experienced, yet there seems to be no evidence of an increase in smoking among men, and although over fifty years there has evidently been a largish increase of cigarette smoking among women, yet lung cancer in females has increased much less than in men, and this last comparison goes the same way whether one takes relative or absolute increases. One would judge from this that whatever may be the cause of increasing lung cancer, and such factors as increased age of the population exposed to risk and increased exposure to exhaust fumes suggest ^{themselves} ~~this is~~, and

have not been excluded, it cannot be inferred that smoking is even a principal cause of this increase.

All this is perfectly consistent with cigarette smoking being a most pernicious habit, but ^{these} manifestly false inferences do give one a reason for pausing before jumping to conclusions.

I should like to see much more detailed information as to how much tobacco, on the average, different types of smoker consume, and as to how cancer incidence is distributed among these, and indeed whether there is any association with lung cancer to be found with the two practices of smoking pipes and smoking cigars, which after all are not very uncommon. It may be that the constant use of cigarette holders can remove a real cause of irritation. It seems to me probable that different classes of smokers are congenitally differentiated, and that the classes which choose different forms of this indulgence are not equally susceptible to all forms of cancer, just as blood groups O and A are now known to be unequally afflicted by cancer of the stomach.

Sincerely yours,