Cancer death rates, USA

Males
- Lung
- Colon-rectum
- Prostate
- Pancreas
- Stomach

Females
- Breast
- Lung
- Colon-rectum
- Pancreas
- Stomach

One cancer you can give yourself.

Position paper on smoking and lung cancer—Page 5940
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This month's cover of Cancer Research highlights the first position paper written for the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR). The article addresses the issue of smoking and lung cancer.

Commissioned by the AACR Committee on Scientific and Public Affairs, the position paper summarizes the technical data on four facets of the problem: 1) the epidemiological correlation between smoking and lung cancer with special emphasis on lung cancer incidence among females; 2) the identification of numerous mutagens and carcinogens in cigarette smoke; 3) the clinical situation, characterized by a very poor survival rate for lung cancer patients; and 4) the social and economic costs to society from tobacco smoking.

The two charts on the cover document the dramatic increase in death rates in the United States due to lung cancer. Death rates from other forms of cancer have either not changed significantly or decreased. In both sexes, the pattern of lung cancer deaths has followed and paralleled smoking prevalence, with a lag time of about 20 years. Smoking patterns among females did not become similar to those of males until after World War II. As a result, the incidence of lung cancer in females who smoke is dramatically increasing. In the United States it is estimated that 85 percent of lung cancer cases among men and 70 percent or more among women are attributable to cigarette smoking. Lung cancer is probably the largest preventable epidemic in the United States.

Recognizing the seriousness of the problem, the Senate and House gave final congressional approval to a bill that will require the current warning on cigarette packs and in smoking advertisements to be replaced with four warnings focused more specifically on the health dangers associated with smoking. On October 13, 1984, President Reagan signed the legislation into law, mandating the use of the following new Surgeon General’s warnings:

□ Smoking causes lung cancer, heart disease, emphysema, and may complicate pregnancy.
□ Quitting smoking now greatly reduces serious risks to your health.
□ Smoking by pregnant women may result in fetal injury, premature birth, and low birth weight.
□ Cigarette smoke contains carbon monoxide.

The warnings are required to be prominently displayed and rotated on a quarterly basis.

Along with the unambiguous scientific evidence linking tobacco smoking with cancer of the lung and other organs, scientists investigating cancer must recognize other issues. Their efforts as researchers and clinicians in understanding and treating cancer will be rendered largely ineffectual if tobacco smoking—the single most important cause of cancer in the United States—spreads to new generations and new parts of the globe. Cancer investigators must ensure that the consequences of smoking are understood both by government and the public. Because cancer researchers have identified tobacco as the major human carcinogen, they have a special responsibility. These scientists must make their findings on tobacco the basis of public policy. A first step in such an effort was taken at the Seventy-Fifth Annual Meeting of the AACR in May 1984 in Toronto. After the findings in this position paper were presented, the members present unanimously endorsed a position statement on smoking and lung cancer, which is reprinted in the position paper.

Cancer Research covers have traditionally featured photographs of researchers who made substantial contributions to our understanding of cancer. This issue's cover includes a photograph of the most significant contributor to lung cancer—the cigarette.

Lawrence A. Loeb and John Abbotts

The two charts on the front of this issue were derived from data presented by E. Silverberg in a recent issue of Ca—A Cancer Journal for Clinicians (34: 7–23, 1984). This information and the photograph of an antismoking advertisement (© 1971) are reprinted with permission of the American Cancer Society. We gratefully acknowledge the American Cancer Society's assistance in the production of this cover.