Smokers are Getting SCARED!

No wonder! Lung cancer is on the increase and authorities point to smoking as a major “suspect.” Here’s the grim story and what you can do about it.

By ROY NORR

THE RUSH is on! Filter-type and king-sized cigarettes, advertised as offering protection from the harmful effects of smoking, are taking king-sized bites out of leader-brand sales volume. Last year some reached within shouting distance of ten billion units, and one actually nosed out a big-name cigarette from number-five position.

It means that smokers are getting scared! They’re wondering just where cigarettes come into the health picture—and more specifically and ominously, where they come into the lung-cancer picture. They have reason to be scared.

Meanwhile, with 800,000 adolescents recruited each year for addiction, with the strong, silent men of the organized medical profession standing on the sidelines on this tragic health issue, with an enormous increase in the appetite for narcotics—and tobacco is one—during this age of anxiety, the cigarette industry has had a field day. It has reached a mountainous production of 400 billion units annually. As against 48 cigarettes per capita consumed in 1903, today’s annual consumption is at the rate of 2500 cigarettes per capita for every human being in the United States.

What this means to the health of the nation was recently blurted out by the industry itself! In big, black type, Lorillard advertisements introduced its filter-type cigarette by telling the world: “According to published medical findings, about one-third of all smokers react abnormally to the nicotine and tar in tobacco.”

It was another way of saying that twenty million men, women, yes, and children—are deleteriously affected by smoking. No one questions that tobacco smoke irritates the mucus lining of the mouth, nose and throat, or that it aggravates hoarseness, coughing, chronic bronchitis and tonsillitis. It is accepted without argument that smoking is forbidden in cases of gastric and duodenal ulcers; that it interferes with normal digestion; that it contracts the blood vessels, increases the heart rate, raises the blood pressure. In many involvements of heart disease—the greatest killer

ILLUSTRATOR: NORMAN KENNON

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of modern times—the first order from the doctor is to cut out smoking immediately.

But what sends the shivers down the spine of the cigarette industry and appalls public health leaders is the dread shadow of cancer that now looms over every medical discussion of the relationship of excessive smoking to diseases of the respiratory tract. For three decades a curtain of smoke almost as impenetrable as the Iron Curtain has largely kept from public notice the bitter controversy raging within medical ranks over the part played by smoking in the dizzying rise of bronchogenic carcinoma, better known as cancer of the lung. But the curtain is now being lifted by shocking statistics.

The increase in lung cancer mortality is reaching almost epidemic proportions, according to the survey published this summer by the United Nations World Health Organization. The report cites the conclusion of an investigation carried out by the Medical Research Council of England and Wales, that "above the age of 45, the risk of developing the disease increases in simple proportion with the amount smoked, and may be 50 times as great among those who smoked twenty-five or more cigarettes daily as among non-smokers."

The latest study, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (May 27, 1952), by a group of noted cancer workers headed by Dr. Alton Ochsner, former President of the American Cancer Society and director of the famous Ochsner Clinic in New Orleans, discloses that during the period 1920 to 1948, deaths from bronchogenic carcinoma in the United States increased over ten times, from 1.1 to 11.3 per 100,000 of the population. From 1938 to 1948, lung cancer deaths increased 144 per cent. At the present time cancer of the mouth and respiratory tract kills 19,000 men and 5,000 women annually in the United States. In 1941 only 442 deaths from cancer of the larynx and lung were cited for men, and 166 deaths for women.

The death rate for cancer had quadrupled in the last fifty years of the nineteenth century, doubled again the last fifty years of this century, and bids fair to quadruple again in the last fifty years, according to other studies. Cancer of the stomach had been the largest cause of cancer mortality for many years, but in 1949 over twice as many patients with cancer of the lung as with gastric cancer

were admitted to the Memorial Hospital in New York.

"It is likely and probable that bronchogenic carcinoma soon will become more frequent than any other cancer of the body, unless something is done to prevent its increase," is Dr. Ochsner's conclusion. "It is frightening to speculate on the possible number of bronchogenic cancers that might develop as the result of the tremendous number of cigarettes consumed in the two decades from 1930 to 1950."

JUST how frightening is made evident by the mammoth research project described in the annual report of the American Cancer Society. The project now under way will determine to the Society's statistical satisfaction whether smoking is a culprit or not, in the terrifying disease of cancer of the lung. The project involves 50,000 volunteer workers, who will undertake a monster death watch over 500,000 aging subjects throughout ten states of the Union. Each volunteer will obtain the smoking histories of ten male acquaintances above fifty years of age—relatives, friends, neighbors. Each year each "case" will be followed up. When death occurs, the cause—and if the cause should be cancer, the type of cancer—will be carefully noted.

"Cancer of the lung," the ACS declares, "is on the increase, especially in men. The death rate for this form of disease in men has tripled in the last twenty years. It is too high to be accounted for simply by the increased population and the greater numbers of older people. Many authorities have suspected smoking as the major cause."

The death watch will be continued for at least five years, by which time, it is stated, "from the large and representative 'sample' from all parts of the country, analysis should adduce the true facts."

That cancer authorities "suspect" smoking as a major cause of lung cancer is a rousing understatement, according to workers in the field. They want something done, and done now, on the basis of clinical knowledge of the subject, to alert, if not alarm, the smoking public. Leading cancer authorities point to an impressive literature on smoking in relation to cancer—largely suppressed from public notice by the advertising pressure of the cigarette industry—due to the most recent investigations of the subject undertaken here and abroad.

They refer to the study of 684 proved cases made by Wynder and Graham for the American Cancer Society and published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, May 27, 1950. The report ("Tobacco Smoking as a Possible Etiologic Factor in Bronchogenic Carcinoma") stated this conclusion: "Excessive and prolonged use of tobacco, especially cigarettes, seems to be an important factor in the induction of bronchogenic carcinoma."

Wynder, in his most recent observations ("Some Practical Aspects of Cancer Prevention," April 10, 1952), has expanded the thought with the statement: "The more a person smokes the greater is the risk of developing cancer of the lung, whereas the risk was small in a non-smoker or a light smoker."

For the British Empire Cancer Society, Doll and Hill, in their report, published in The British Medical Journal ("Smoking and Carcinoma of the Lung," September 6, 1952), presented this finding: "We . . . conclude that smoking is a factor and an important factor, in the production of carcinoma of the lung."

What is true of lung cancer is true of other cancers of the respiratory tract. The latest summary of medical literature on the subject is published by Wynder, now associated with the Memorial Cancer Center in New York. His summary ("Some Practical Aspects of Cancer Prevention," April, 1952) lists tobacco as the major factor in cancer of the larynx, the pharynx, the esophagus, and of the oral cavity. Wynder in beginning his study, writes: "In 1926, Ewing in an article on 'Cancer Prevention,' wrote that 'though a great body of clinical information shows that many forms of cancer are due to preventable causes, there has been little systematic research to impress this fact on the medical profession or to convey it to the public.' This was true then, as it is today.

The fact that even today there is an enormous lag in the preventive side of cancer education is not denied by leading lung cancer specialists. Yet here is a reply recently received by this writer from the American Cancer Society on a question directed to this very issue: "At the present time we do not know the principal causes of cancer in the human population. The American Cancer Society is supporting research on a number of different factors, including smoking, which have been suggested or suspected as being important causes of cancer. We are not in a position to take any action until the facts are known."

From the outgoing president of the American Medical Association came
this statement: "There is still considerable dispute as to what part smoking may play in the development of cancer of the lung. When sufficient information is available on the subject to make a positive statement concerning it, it will be made. This will require a period of years to ascertain."

Nothing could better serve the tobacco industry than for the cigarette-smoking problem to be put in deep freeze for five years, while medical bureaucrats await the result of further "extensive surveys". Meanwhile, the campaigns for cigarette addiction would continue on the air. The "testimonializers" would reign supreme. The "Doctor" on the television screen could still prescribe his cigarettes as a remedy for Smoker's Cough. And the huckster would continue to blitl the American family with fake medical claims.

For the next five years thousands of our youth will be inducted into the army of the doomed-to-die agonizingly, as is the case of lung cancer, because "no action can be taken until the facts are known". Man knows as little as he did one hundred years ago of the mystery of cell growth gone on a rampage, which is cancer. But we do know much of the possible, and even probable causes of the disease, contributory or direct, in many of the forms which cancer takes.

The persistent inertia of medical bureaucracy has helped the tobacco industry obscure the truth. The tender relationship between the medical hierarchy and the cigarette makers has been evident through many years. The "bible" of the profession, the Journal of the American Medical Association, in its advertising pages, was glad to accept Dorothy Lamour as an authority on cigarette "mildness"; to present the claim that "not a single case of throat irritation was due to smoking---", and until recently to feed 160,000 doctors with the false claims of a cigarette "proved definitely and measurably less irritating to the throat."

Apparently, however, the AMA has taken another look at the problem. Its outgoing president in a communication last February disclosed to this writer that the decision of its trustees, made two years ago, to "eliminate health claims in cigarettes" in the advertising pages of the Journal, was at last being put into effect. The rule had been held in abeyance, because it was felt that "forced radical change in the advertising" might influence certain pending action before the Federal Trade Commission. That was the explanation.

It is a tragic thought that the risk of lung cancer through cigarette addiction should be many times multiplied by the comfort and aid which the cigarette habit has received from organized medical sources.

Few cancer authorities whom this writer has interviewed have any doubt that a new educational campaign, if organized, with the help of independent medical opinion, the public health forces of the nation, educators, parent-teacher associations, ministerial bodies, and women's clubs, would save untold thousands of lives.

A "Prevent Cancer!" campaign to face up to the threat of tobacco is everyone's business. You can help too.

First, alert the public to the danger. The more people who point to the medical fact that tobacco smoking is listed "among the recognized and suspect sources" of cancer of the respiratory tract, the more headway prevention will make. Even if you can't do anything else, you can do this much.

Second, stop the fake testimonials. Those 800,000 adolescents who are yearly initiated into smoking are captivated largely by Hollywood and radio favorites, stage and opera stars, who beg and cajole them to try their brands. They represent all that is glamour, popularity and success to their youthful followings. Legislation that would declare any health testimonial bought and paid for as patently insincere and therefore fraudulent advertising, would put the testimonial mills operating openly in Hollywood and New York out of business.

Third, rip off the mask from cigarette claims. Arthur Godfrey challenges his listeners: "I don't know what you smoke, but why don't you try to find out what's in your cigarette? You'd be surprised."

You would, indeed, if you knew that more than one hundred adulterants have been used during the years in the process of tobacco manufacture, and, that one—diethylene glycol—considered not harmful when used as a moistening agent in cigarettes, killed more than one hundred people when used as a solvent in a promising "medicine."

Yes, the public is entitled to full disclosure! Legislation requiring that the chemicals added be clearly stated on every package of cigarettes is long overdue.

Fourth, break the stranglehold of the tobacco huckster on the people's air. The greatest smoke barrage ever hurled at the American public has been with the help of television. You can't turn on your TV set without being told how to cure sore throat by switching your brand. Switch to what? To smooth, rich, ripe, roasted or toasted golden tobacco? No more damaging myth has ever been foisted on the public mind! The real commodity which the cigarette people sell is smoke—a dry, destructive distillate of tobacco leaves largely composed of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, nicotine, ammonia, formaldehyde, furfural, tars and formic acid.

When it comes to smoke, half-truths, misleading assertions, insincere comparisons and fraudulent claims are cheerfully tolerated in television. The public responsibility which the networks have surrendered to the tobacco sponsor is no better stated than in their industry code and their own company regulations which read:

"A television broadcaster should, in recognition of his responsibility to the public, refuse the facilities of his station to an advertiser where he has good reason to doubt the integrity of the advertiser and the truth of his advertising representations. Testimonials must reflect the authenticated experience of competent living witnesses."

When dramatized commercials are used that involve statements by doctors, dentists, nurses, the lines must be read by members of these professions, reciting actual experiences. No consideration of expediency should be permitted to impinge upon the vital responsibility towards children and adolescents which is inherent in television."

If cigarettes cannot be promoted with truth and restraint, if broadcasting is to neglect the public good, then the sole recourse of the citizenry is Congressional action.

Tell your Congressman, and your local radio and television stations!

There could be no finer crusade than the tracking down through research of the evil spirit of cancer in the immense darkness in which it still lies. But while that is going on, we dare not neglect prevention, where the light is bright. It makes sense to try to prevent what clinical evidence indicates as preventable cancers. Among the areas in which this possibility is greatest are the critical areas of lung cancer, mouth cancer, throat cancer.

To continue to ignore the major suspected cause—the excessive use of cigarettes—would be one of the blackest social crimes of our day.