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In his rebuttal of 20 January to Jon Cohen's articles about the "Duesberg phenomenon" (Special News Report, 9 Dec., p. 1642), Duesberg misrepresents data from the San Francisco Men's Health Study (SFMHS) cited by us. Duesberg asserts that all of the AIDS cases occurring in the reported 96-month follow-up of the SFMHS cohort "had used poppers in addition to other recreational drugs. . .," implying a causal role for the drug. In fact, we reported that of these 215 patients (not 213 as stated by Duesberg), 54 had a history of "heavy" popper use, weekly or more often, during the 2 years before they entered the study, and 161 had a history of "light" use, defined as no use or less than weekly. There were 27 nonusers of poppers among the 161. With respect to other recreational drugs, 36% of homosexual men in the cohort reported heavy use, as defined above, of marijuana,

7% reported heavy use of cocaine, and 1% reported heavy use of amphetamines.

Duesberg also says that our commentary included data that can be interpreted as supportive of a causal role for AZT use in AIDS. Although we made no mention of AZT (1), relevant data from the SFMHS are available. Among 233 AIDS patients, 169 (73%) had been treated with AZT at one time or another. However, 90 (53% of the 169) had received their AIDS diagnosis before beginning AZT treatment, and another 51 (30% of the 169) had CD4⁺ lymphocyte counts of less than 300 cells per microliter before initiation of AZT treatment. These data are not consistent with the hypothesis of a causal role for AZT in AIDS.

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References

1. M. S. Ascher, H. W. Sheppard, W. Winkelstein, E. Vittinghoff, *Nature* **362**, 103 (1993).

Fungicide Regulation and Food Safety

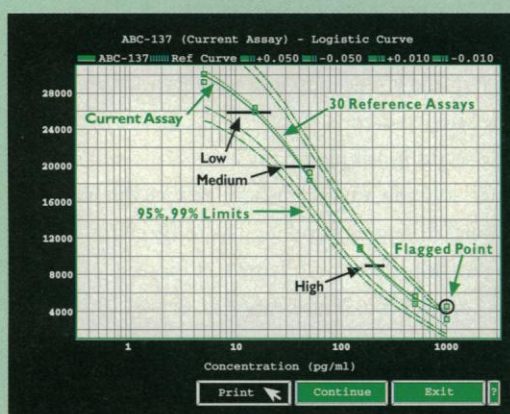
I take exception to Philip H. Abelson's editorial (25 Nov., p. 1303) about the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) proposed settlement of a lawsuit with Natural Resources Defense Council, the State of California, and others over the EPA's implementation of the anticancer Delaney clause. Abelson cites the settlement as an immediate cause for concern that could lead to the "banning of fungicides" and eventually to "food scarcities." It will not.

While the settlement commits EPA to decide about the applicability of the Delaney clause, as the law requires, it does not require that we ban any pesticides. It addresses only the use of certain carcinogenic pesticides—those that are applied directly to processed food or that appear to concentrate when raw food is processed.

Abelson says that distribution of the widely used fungicide captan "is slated eventually to cease." In fact, of its more than 50 uses, only three—application to grapes, tomatoes, and plums—would be covered by the settlement; and EPA may conclude that the Delaney clause does not affect them. Similarly, his forecast of drastic cuts in production of fruits and vegetables

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—Philip H. Abelson