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#### Tobacco Research

The article by Jon Cohen dealing with the Council for Tobacco Research (CTR) ("To-

bacco money lights up a debate," Special News Report, 26 Apr., p. 488) is relatively reasonable. However, one error should be corrected.

Seventeen years ago, a CTR-sponsored study by epidemiologist Gary Friedman, published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* (1) indicated a higher rate of heart disease in smokers than in nonsmokers. Cohen's article states that "CTR took the unusual step of issuing a press release stating that the study had not made 'any suggestion of cause and effect.'" We believe this statement may be attributed to Stanton Glantz *et al.* (1, p. 323) in reference to an internal memorandum of one of the tobacco companies.

At no time did CTR issue any public statement relative to the publication by Friedman. Indeed, CTR has always encouraged investigators to publish results of research, whether favorable or unfavorable to the tobacco industry. An unbiased survey of the more than 1000 investigators that CTR has supported will confirm that no effort has ever been made to direct research or the publication of results.

**James F. Glenn**

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer,  
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 900 Third Avenue,  
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1. S. Glantz *et al.*, *The Cigarette Papers* (Univ. of California Press, Berkeley, 1996).

**Response:** Glenn is correct that the document I referred to is not a CTR press release. I regret the error. Unfortunately, Glenn did not respond to repeated requests for an interview that might have clarified this point. Glantz, who quoted from the memo in the 19 July 1995 *Journal of the American Medical Association*, introduced it by writing that "CTR released the following public statement." He said he "surmised" that it was a CTR memo based on where it was in the collection of leaked documents he received. The document instructs the staff of an unidentified organization, which Glenn says is a tobacco company, that "[t]his is our statement when asked for comment on the paper published today in the *New England Journal of Medicine* by Friedman, a CTR grantee." The document says in part

There isn't any suggestion of cause-and-effect. . . . This and so much else in the medical literature just shows that we have a great deal more to learn before we can reach any solid conclusions about smoking. It may or may not be hazardous, and that's where we are.

(The memo can be seen on the Internet at <http://galen.library.ucsf.edu/tobacco/docs/html/1916.01/1916.01.html>.)—**Jon Cohen**

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There appears to be a rise in a sort of "know nothing" attitude accompanying the debate about tobacco money's use in the study of tobacco-related disease. This attitude was most strikingly illustrated by a 1993 editorial in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* (1). That editorial addressed itself to a study which found an elevated lung cancer risk associated with high-fat diets among *nonsmoking* women. The editorial first downgraded the importance of adding one more disease (lung cancer) to the health consequences of a high-fat diet because this information "is hardly needed to strengthen the argument for taking aggressive public health measures to lower the average fat level in the American diet; second, it asks

does the identification of secondary risk factors for lung cancer not play into the hands of the tobacco industry, which grasps at these straws in its relentless effort to diminish the significance of cigarette smoking as the overwhelming cause of breast cancer . . . ?

Apparently Stanton Glantz *et al.* [authors of *The Cigarette Papers* (2)] agree. My sin, they contend (according to Cohen) is

that some of my tobacco-related studies have focused on "examining factors that could potentially confound the association of tobacco smoke and adverse health effects." Does that mean that if something other than smoking is discovered to cause a smoking-associated disease, they don't want to know about it?

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### Uninterrupted Electric Power

Given the importance of reliable and uninterrupted electrical power in the United States (Philip H. Abelson, Editorial, 19 Jan., p. 273) and throughout North Amer-

ica, we believe that more effort needs to be made to provide warnings of geomagnetic disturbances, which have had an increasing impact on technology systems such as electric grids as these systems become more sophisticated. Reliable advance warnings would give those who are affected by these storms the ability to prepare for them. This is the consensus of a joint commerce, research, and military task force under the sponsorship of the National Science Foundation convened to formulate a "National Space Weather Program Strategic Plan." The plan's 1995 executive summary (1, p. 5) notes that

The Nation's reliance on technological systems is growing exponentially, and many of these systems are susceptible to failure or unreliable performance because of extreme space weather conditions. . . . We now have the scientific knowledge and the technical skills to move forward to dramatically improve space weather understanding, forecasts, and services to meet customer needs.

The United States is now undertaking a multi-agency space Weather Initiative to provide early warning of impending space disturbances. This has the goal of devising methods to avoid power system failures and other effects of the space environment on human technological systems. We urge cooperation in the development of such methods to avoid catastrophic failures in power systems. Such warning methods could save billions of dollars each year.

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1. Office of the Federal Coordinator for Meteorological Service, *National Space Weather Program Strategic Plan* (FCM-P30-1995, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Silver Spring, MD, 1995).



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