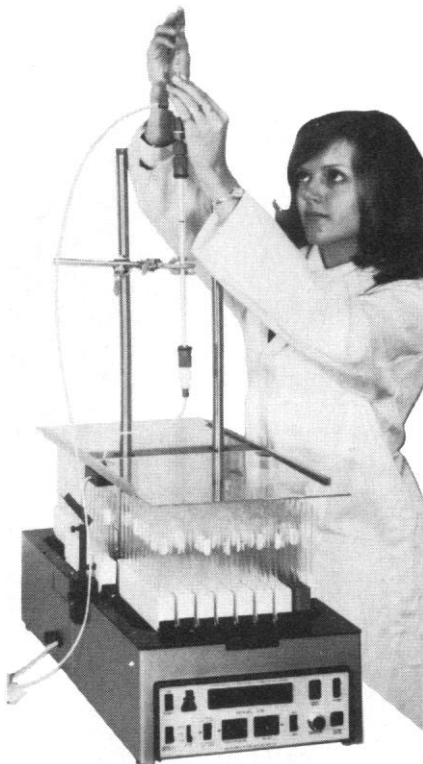


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polio vaccinees instead of 5000 paralytic cases (estimated lifetime risk per million before a vaccine was developed)? Equivalent risk-benefit balances could also be calculated for preventive interventions for other than infectious diseases, although the "risk" might be measured by social or economic factors rather than illnesses or deaths.

As part of the development of that consensus, our society would presumably want to address the issue of an equitable sharing of the damage caused by preventive programs. It would not be unreasonable for those protected to bear at least the financial burden of those unavoidably injured, by providing appropriate, tax-based support to the victims or their families.

Since few would wish to solve this problem by abolishing our medical intelligence system, or by censoring the publication of medical news, we must undertake the arduous task of developing a social philosophy on public health risks and benefits. Failure to do so will permit the acceleration of a beginning breakdown in public health programming.

HENRY M. GELFAND

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Clever Lawyers

Luther J. Carter, in his article (News and Comment, 14 Jan., p. 162) describing the 10-year struggle in Michigan to license and build the Midland nuclear station (to supply electricity to Consumers Power Company and steam to the Dow Chemical Company) concludes—correctly—that "the nuclear enterprise is one of agonizing uncertainty."

Carter further says that partners in a nuclear venture need, in addition to strong faith and good luck, "clever lawyers to write the contracts [between the partners] so as to make the uncertainty bearable." Lawyers may strive for clarity in contracts, but they have little chance to alleviate the growing anxiety suffered by their clients in today's uncertain regulatory climate.

In 1967 was any lawyer clever enough to foresee the regulatory chaos of 1977? If there was, and he then so advised his client, his vision would probably have been taken as insane hallucination, and a less clever lawyer would have been retained in his stead.

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