

Re: Why Do Researchers Tell Lies About Smoking and Health?

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On Thu, 24 May 2007 00:25:17 +0800, Ray Johnstone <ray@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

Why Do Researchers Tell Lies About Smoking and Health?
Scientists like to have new ideas and results. That is how science makes progress. But the ideas and results must not be too radical. They must be compatible with orthodox science. For the question of smoking and health that means they must be consistent with the belief that smoking is overall harmful to health.

– I'd only say, "... overall harmful to health in many respects."

This poses a serious but not insurmountable problem for scientists studying diseases which appear to be prevented by smoking. This includes ulcerative colitis,

Well, they can't spout off like idiots, but I'm not sure where there is a 'serious' problem at all. The scientists who *really* have to speak carefully are the ones whose evidence indicate that a daily drink or two might help prevent heart disease, while acknowledging that much more drink than that is a hazard for both physical and mental health.

pre-eclampsia, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, allergic lung disease and dementia. Papers describing such work usually include a statement such as: "Conclusions – These findings suggest an inverse association between smoking and Alzheimer's disease, although smoking cannot be advocated for other health reasons." (van Duijn and Hofman, 1991) It is like a protective mantra: Yes, smoking seems to prevent some disease but this has not shaken our faith. [... break]

Re: Why Do Researchers Tell Lies About Smoking and Health?

The major cause of death from smoking is heart disease, not cancer.
That handles a couple of your further objections.

These days, one link seems to be between smoking, infections
of the gums, and the circulatory system.

A major feature to consider in the practice of science is the
"research program." Scientists look in the directions where
advance seems possible. This has long been the case,
according to the people who study the history of science.

I recommend the book, *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*,
edited by Imre Lakatos. This is a set of discussions from a
symposium on the ideas of Thomas Kuhn's –