

That was then; this is now!

**John Acquavella, PhD
American College of Epidemiology
25th Anniversary Annual Meeting
Fort Lauderdale, FL
September 18, 2007**

ACE Annual Meeting

Boston, Massachusetts • September 11-14, 2004



"When Science Meets Policy"

Focusing attention on the role of epidemiologists and epidemiologic research on the interplay between science and policy.

What is our professional role in large multi-disciplinary research studies and policy formulating bodies?

Are there better ways to deal with conflict of interest issues that arise in the conduct of our research and in the review and interpretation of research findings?

Should observational study analysis incorporate sources of uncertainty other than random error?

Is sensitivity analysis appropriate and how might this impact policy?

What is the role, if any, of epidemiologists in implementing the precautionary principle?

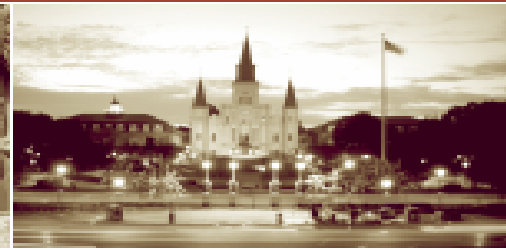
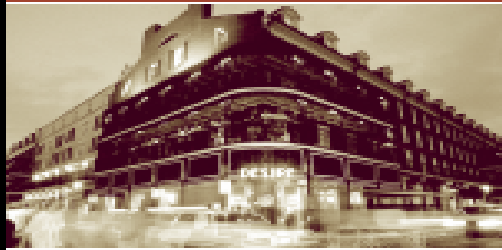
We propose to tackle these and other challenges to the discipline at the 2004 Annual Meeting.

If you would like to help plan the program, please contact Faith Davis (fayed@uic.edu) or John Acquavella (john.f.acquavella@monsanto.com) or Marlene Goldman (mgoldman@caregroup.harvard.edu).

American College of Epidemiology Annual Scientific Sessions

Epidemiology and Advocacy in the Real World: Focusing Attention on How Advocacy Shapes the Practice of Epidemiology

September 17-20, 2005 • Fairmont Hotel • New Orleans, LA



Educational Workshops,
Preliminary Program,
and Registration Information

Top Stories

New Orleans Notes

Terry Fontham

As local host for this year's ACE meeting in New Orleans, I couldn't wait to welcome you to our city. The planned program was outstanding and New Orleans a delightful venue for combining work and pleasure. What a nice job to have! As we all know that's now history, but I sincerely hope that the work of the program committee will be offered in the near future in some appropriate venue. I also hope, undoubtedly optimistically, that the rebuilt New Orleans retains our unique culture and charm while addressing the myriad of problems that have long plagued our city, resulting in poor health, grossly inadequate education and staggering poverty.

I left New Orleans on August 27 and, as I write this on October 7, I have not yet returned to the city. On a personal note, my family and I are fine. We were able





FROM THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF EPIDEMIOLOGY NOTES AND VIEWS



LETTER

Looking back at hurricane Katrina: lessons for 2006 and beyond

In 2005, for the first time in memory, the National Weather Service ran through an entire list of alphabetized proper names and resorted to naming hurricanes after Greek letters. All told, there were a record 28 tropical and subtropical storms formed, of which a record 15 became hurricanes. Two of the 2005 season's hurricanes, Katrina and Wilma, were among the top three most costly hurricanes in the his-

elsewhere – if we hope to determine if there were long-term adverse health effects from the storm and flooding. We will need to measure a range of outcomes, mental and physical, as well as the timing, duration, and intensity of exposures, not only to pollutants, but also to the emotional trauma of the storm's threat to life and livelihood. While there may be some short-term effect from pollutants, as we learned

Foxman B, Camargo CA, Lilienfeld D, et al. *Annals Epidemiol* 2006; 16; 652-653.



**Join us for the Second
North American Congress
of Epidemiology**

June 21-24, 2006
Westin Seattle Hotel • Seattle, WA

www.epicongress2006.org

Join us for the
**American College of Epidemiology's
25th Annual Meeting**

September 15-18, 2007

Eden Roc, A Renaissance Resort & Spa • Miami Beach, Florida

www.edenroccresort.com



Save the dates for an exciting meeting in Miami!

Rothman KJ. The Rise and Fall of Epidemiology 1950-2000 AD – NEJM 1981

“The College, which was spurned by the profession when it was organized as a self-proclaimed accrediting body, used its entrance examination to restrict admission to its ranks. By 1990, certification by the College was regarded as instrumental for success in the courtrooms and hearing rooms where nearly all epidemiologic issues were decided.”

Note – this was a satirical piece

Rothman KJ. Epidemiology Still Rising

Int J Epidemiol (in press)

“... new obstacles would confront epidemiologists and demand attention. ... The American College of Epidemiology portrayed in the essay as becoming our professional union, was instrumental in getting research exemptions written into the law (viz. HIPPA).”

“In the mid-nineties, I had to abandon a study of cellular telephones and brain cancer because a tort lawyer filed a class action suit to get his hands on the names of cellular telephone users who had brain cancer. Again, the American college of Epidemiology was helpful in opposing this grim development.”

Changing Face of Epidemiologists

- **More ethnic/racial diversity**
- **More programs and students**
- **More career choices, esp. private sector**

1995 Statement of Principles

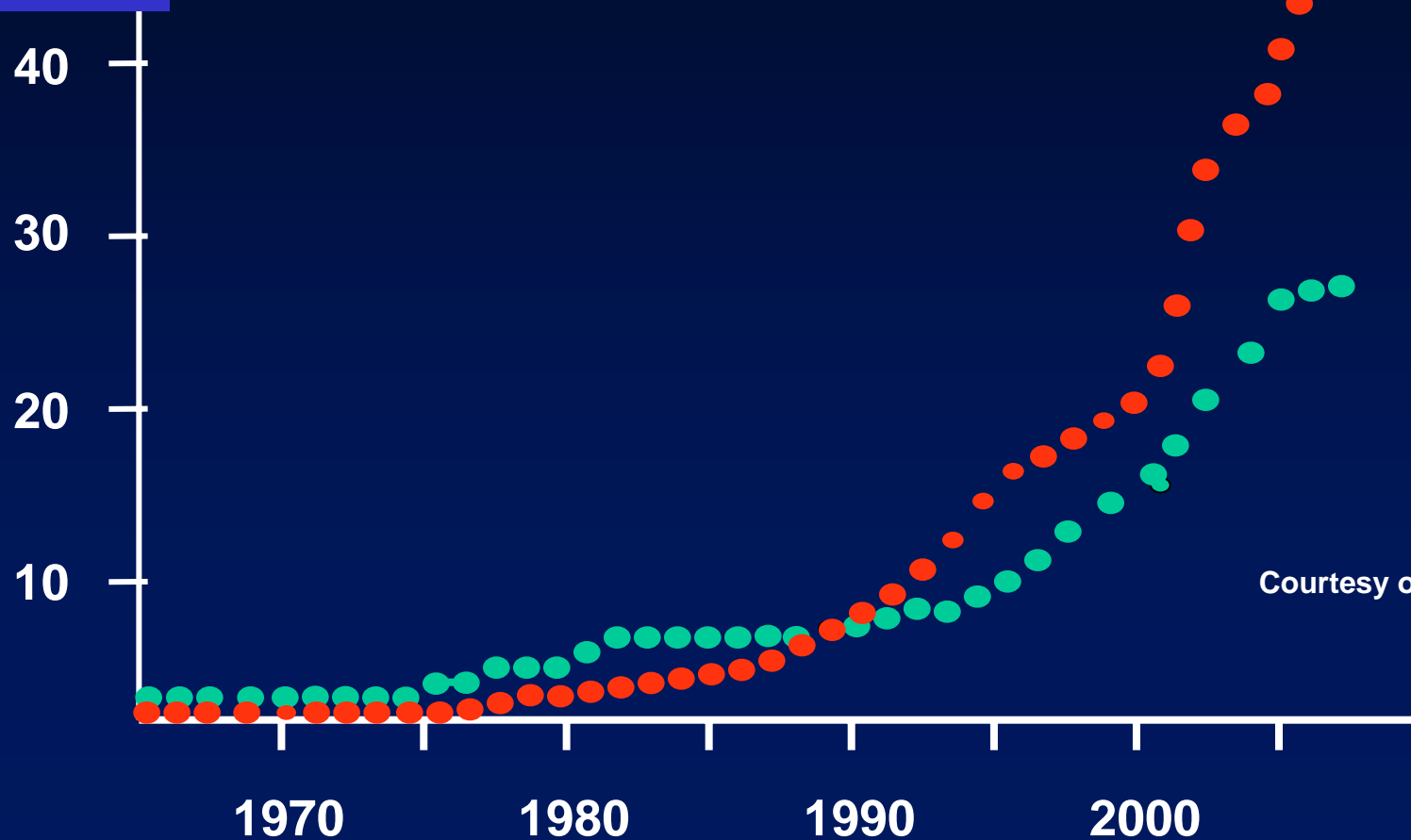
- The annual scientific meeting of the College will reflect racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity
- The dearth of minorities at all levels of the College will be rectified
- A standing committee on minority affairs will be created to increase representation of minorities in the profession.

Biomedical R & D Spending

Pharma ●

NIH ●

\$ Billion



Courtesy of Dr. T. Stossel

Private Sector Epidemiologists

- Disqualified from service on expert panels
- Less likely to be journal editors or elected officials [Annals, ACE are exceptions]
- Journal peer review can be adversarial for non-scientific reasons
- Published work is sometimes assumed, a priori, to be biased

A Priori Perception of Bias

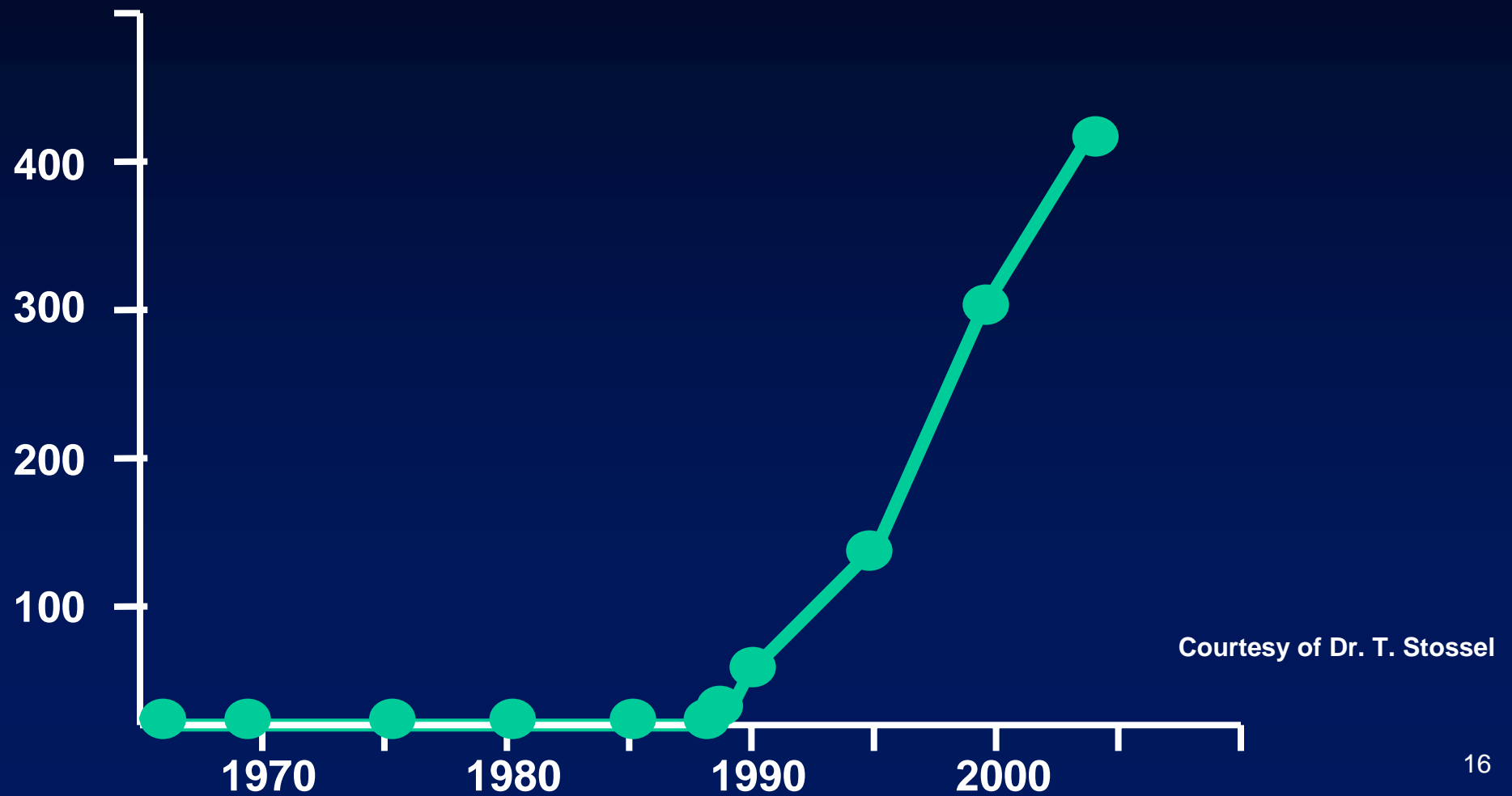
“We, like many others, give most credence to papers published in reputable journals by academics working in institutes of excellence. The credibility rating goes down when a project is funded by a drug company that has an interest in its outcome.”

Raveendran R, Gitanjali B. Lancet 1997;349:1173-1174.

Private Sector Epidemiologists

- **Ad hominem attacks**
- **Collaborations with government epidemiologists face political hurdles, lately insurmountable**
- **Cannot assure potential sponsors that their research will be judged fairly**

Conflict of Interest Publications



Instructions for Authors

jama.ama-assn.org, assessed August 29, 2007

For industry-sponsored studies, an analysis of the data (entire raw data set, study protocol, and prespecified plan for data analysis) must be conducted by an independent statistician at an academic institution, such as a medical school, academic medical center, or government research institute, that has oversight over the person conducting the analysis and that is independent of the commercial sponsor.

My Colleague's Response from the JAMA Editor & Reviewer

“The editors ask that you arrange for an academic statistician from outside the sponsoring company to have complete access to the raw data and to provide a letter in writing that he/she agrees with your main findings.”

Reviewer B: “The statistical analysis should be conducted independent of the pharmaceutical company.”

Secret Ties to Industry and Conflicting Interests in Cancer Research

Lennart Hardell, MD, PhD,¹⁻³ Martin J. Walker, MA,^{2,4} Bo Walhjalt,³
Lee S. Friedman, BA, MSc,^{4,5} and Elihu D. Richter, MD, MPH⁵

Background Recently it was reported that a Swedish professor in environmental health has for decades worked as a consultant for Philip Morris without reporting his employment to his academic employer or declaring conflicts of interest in his research. The potential for distorting the epidemiological assessments of hazard and risk through paid consultants, pretending to be independent, is not exclusive to the tobacco industry.

Methods Documentation is drawn from peer reviewed publications, websites, documents from the Environmental Protection Agency, University reports, Wellcome Library Special Collections and the Washington Post.

Results Some consulting firms employ university researchers for industry work thereby disguising industry links in the income of large departments. If the industry affiliation is concealed by the scientist, biases from conflicting interests in risk assessments cannot be evaluated and dealt with properly. Furthermore, there is reason to suspect that editors and journal staff may suppress publication of scientific results that are adverse to industry owing to internal conflict of interest between editorial integrity and business needs.

Conclusions Examples of these problems from Sweden, UK, and USA are presented. The shortfalls cited in this article illustrate the need for improved transparency, regulations that will help curb abuses as well as instruments for control and enforcement against abuses. Am. J. Ind. Med. 2006.

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KEY WORDS: cancer research; conflicts of interest; consulting ethics; industry sponsors

Secret Ties to Industry ... re Sir Richard Doll and others

It is highly likely that there were delays in addressing the carcinogenic risks that these epidemiologists minimized in the interests of their clients.”

Hero or Villain?—Sir Richard Doll and Occupational Cancer

GEOFFREY TWEEDALE, PHD

In 2006, the English media broke the story that Sir Richard Doll had for many years been retained on a secret consultancy by Monsanto. Doll's colleagues rushed to his defense, arguing that the story was an unjustified smear on a great man whose work had saved millions of lives. However, Doll's conflicts of interest in his occupational health epidemiology are shown to sit uneasily alongside his more independent smoking/lung cancer studies. *Key words:* Sir Richard Doll; conflicts of interest.

INT J OCCUP ENVIRON HEALTH 2007;13:233–235

On 8 December 2006, English readers of the *Guardian* newspaper (and listeners to BBC Radio 4's *Today* program) breakfasted on an exposé of Sir Richard Doll. The headline ran: "Renowned Cancer Scientist Was Paid by Chemical Firm for 20 Years." The article revealed that Doll had a longstanding and undeclared consultancy with chemical giant Monsanto.¹

The details of Doll's consultancy with Monsanto had

pany at the center of the Agent Orange investigation) and moreover was about to negotiate a more lucrative consultancy. When Hardell and his colleagues learned this, they wrote an article on conflicts of interest in science that later fed into the *Guardian* exposé.⁵

The revelations were duly reported in other newspapers. Some were highly critical of Doll and felt that his "strictly neutral and objective image is now discredited for good."⁶ The socialist press felt that he had abandoned his earlier left-wing ideals and that his legacy was tainted.⁷ The overwhelming reaction, however, was one of support for Doll and dismay at the journalism. *The Times* reported that it was: "A cheap shot at the man who fought Big Tobacco. . . . He has been traduced by *The Guardian* and the *Today Programme* as a hypocrite. Innuendoes are made that he fudged evidence in the interests of his commercial masters. But he is in his grave, beyond defending himself against the slings and arrows of those who equate business with criminality."⁸ *The Observer* described Doll as "a hero, not a villain," and—while telling its readers that Doll had lived in a "modest house" in north Oxford (actually, it is one of the better addresses in the city)—

For Consideration by the College

- **Advocate a balanced perspective on conflict of interest**
- **Encourage engagement**
- **Advocate blinded peer review by journals**
- **Push for greater inclusiveness on editorial boards and expert panels**
- **Issue guidelines for industry programs**
- **Issue guidelines for consulting with industry**