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Dear Sirs:

This year, 600,000 Americans will die – miserably – of cancer.

Beginning in 1987, in Taiwan, there was an inadvertent test of low-level radiation on 10,000 people. Scrap steel from a decommissioned nuclear plant found its way to the scrap market, and was melted down and used in the construction of apartments for 10,000 citizens. The radioactivity of the apartments was discovered accidentally, but not until 1993.

The health authorities naturally assumed that long-term exposure to the cobalt-60 in the steel would multiply the number of cancer patients in the buildings, which included some schools. But the number of those with cancer turned out to be just 3% of the number of those that would have been found in 10,000 similar people outside the apartments. Someone had the smart idea of checking for birth defects in children whose mothers had been pregnant in the new apartments. There was a 95% reduction in birth defects.

These results clearly are a massive counter-argument to those insist – apparently on no evidence acceptable to nuclear scientists – that all nuclear radiation must be harmful even in the smallest amount; that it is “linear no-threshold.”

So we have the relevant government organization being held to a theory which has no backing and in effect prevents the testing of low-radioactivity nuclear materials, although these materials might save hundreds of thousands of lives each year.

May I strongly suggest that linear no-threshold be eliminated in considering nuclear risk, and the NRC assist in research on the medical uses of low-level radioactivity.

Thomas N. Cochran

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