

The Great Carcinogen Hype

By ACSH Staff — February 8, 2005

Hard-nosed reporter and man-about-town Gary Shapiro wrote an article for the [New York Sun](#) ^[1] the week of February 8, 2005 that included a description of the New York release party for ACSH's book [America's War on "Carcinogens"](#) ^[2] and a mention of Johnny Carson's smoking-induced death:

RISK REDEFINED: At a reception for the new book [America's War on "Carcinogens": Reassessing the Use of Animal Tests to Predict Human Cancer](#) ^[2], the president of the American Council on Science and Health (ACSH), Elizabeth M. Whelan, recommended eating farm-raised salmon as one way to avoid carcinogens. A former lieutenant governor, Betsy McCaughey, hosted the event at her Upper East Side home. Ms. Whelan wrote the foreword and was co-editor of the book. It analyzes the scientific facts behind public health scares such as those involving water chlorination, hair dye, barbequed food, and even cranberries. The ACSH has found that though high doses of certain substances may cause cancer in mice or rats, it does not necessarily follow that small amounts ingested by humans pose a cancer threat...

Focus on various unsubstantiated fears has diverted public attention from real threats such as smoking, [Dr.] Whelan said. "We all have the same mortality rate -- 100%," she added. "We are well aware that the recommendations in this book will cause a regulatory earthquake -- about a 10 on the public-health Richter scale..."

CARCINOGENS AND CARSON: Johnny Carson's long-time head writer on the Tonight show, Ray Siller, told his friend publicist Sy Presten that he begged Carson many times to please give up smoking. Carson, who died of emphysema, kept saying, "I'm going to outlive the people who tell me to quit smoking."

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