Distinguishing Association from Causation: A Backgrounder for Journalists

By ACSH Staff — October 29, 2007

[Scientific studies that show an association between a factor and a health effect do not necessarily imply that the factor causes the health effect. Many such studies are preliminary reports that cannot justify any valid claim of causation without considerable additional research, experimentation, and replication. Claims of causation should never be made lightly. Premature or poorly justified claims of causation can mislead people into thinking that something they are exposed to is endangering their health, when this may not be true, or that a useless or even dangerous product may produce desirable health effects. Distinguishing Association from Causation: A Backgrounder for Journalists]

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