Childhood leukemia and proximity to nuclear power plants: No link

By ACSH Staff — May 9, 2011

Although this concern seemed alarmist from the start, it is comforting to know that the results of a just-released 35-year study conducted by scientists on the Committee of the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) find[1] that there is no increased risk for leukemia among children living near nuclear power plants in the U.K. Between 1969 and 2004, only 20 cases of childhood leukemia were reported within a three-mile radius of 13 nuclear power plant sites across Britain. This rate of childhood leukemia does not differ from that found among children living in areas with no nuclear plants, making the added risk of disease “extremely small, if not zero.”

The new findings also counter a previous 2007 German study that found a significantly increased risk of leukemia among children living near power plants, stating that those results were likely to have been due to an unexplained leukemia cluster near a power plant in northern Germany.

ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross points out that, while you can’t prove a negative, the lack of evidence linking nuclear power plants to childhood leukemia indicates that “it is highly unlikely that leukemia — or any other cancer — is related to nuclear plant proximity. Therefore, I’d say that this source should be eliminated from consideration as a likely cancer causation factor.”


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