Respected cancer agency maybe shouldn’t be

By ACSH Staff — November 21, 2012

Based in Lyon, France, the International Agency for Research on Cancer is a widely respected body that produces assessments of carcinogens for use by regulators and researchers. But reputable scientists are now disassociating themselves from IARC and its research methods, a cancer epidemiologist at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine writes in Forbes [1].

In the eye-opening piece, ACSH scientific advisor Dr. Geoffrey Kabat describes how the IARC classified cellphone use as possibly carcinogenic even though the overall evidence overwhelmingly failed to show a link between cellphone use and cancer. The group similarly classified coffee and DDT, despite the complete lack of evidence linking either of them to cancer in humans or animals, Kabat says. Meanwhile, only one chemical out of roughly a thousand evaluated by the agency has been deemed probably not carcinogenic.

Contamination of what is billed as science-based risk assessment by activist researchers and by the precautionary principle has become a pervasive problem, Kabat writes. By emphasizing precaution, advocates can favor those studies that appear to show a hazard and appeal to the public, always relying on the argument that anyone who questions the interpretation of the evidence must be a shill of industry.

We strongly encourage you to read the entire article [1].

Dr. Kabat’s essay represents the mission we promote here every day our goal is to expose and oppose those who would cloak political activism and ideology in the guise of science, ACSH’s Dr. Gilbert Ross says. His elaboration of the so-called precautionary principle is particularly edifying, since he clearly outlines how, if followed stringently, progress in every field would grind to a halt, as the public would say, oh, maybe something bad could happen. The anti-technology activists don’t care about the harm they’re doing to science and progress.

ACSH’s Cheryl Martin points to the ACSH Holiday Dinner menu [2], which reveals how each course of the Thanksgiving feasts many of us will be eating tomorrow is loaded with nature’s own carcinogens such as allyl isothiocyanate, coumarin and methyl eugenol. Each of these, and many more, would be banned if they were synthetic, based on high-dose rodent tests. Thankfully, all of these chemicals are perfectly safe when consumed in small doses.

So enjoy the holiday, as we’ll be doing Dispatch will return on Monday.