

# Cancer Incidence, Mortality Declining

*By ACSH Staff — March 29, 1999*

To the Editor:

When Dr. Samuel Epstein (letter, March 15) refers to "the cancer epidemic," he apparently believes that if he and his activist cohorts repeat a falsehood often enough, the American public will come to believe it. The facts, however, prove that the opposite is true: according to statistics published by the National Cancer Institute, and endorsed by the American Cancer Society, cancer incidence and mortality rates have been declining over the past five years.

Of course, there are individual exceptions to this general rule, as is to be expected. Lung cancer rates in women, for example, are still rising. This is attributable to the increased rate of smoking in women over the past two decades. The increased incidence rate of prostate cancer earlier this decade, and the increased rate of breast cancer which occurred in the 1980's, were both attributable to better methods of detection. Lower death rates for both types of cancer, which is after all the goal of early detection, have recently been achieved.

Furthermore, blithely ascribing this non-existent "cancer epidemic" to environmental carcinogens betrays Epstein's motivation: to encourage the public's baseless fear of insidious "chemicals" and "carcinogens" in our "air, water, and food...." Anything can cause cancer in laboratory rodents; humans, fortunately, are made of sterner stuff.

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