

Community Medicine at University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

Using the Valdez, Alaska, oil terminal and attendant exposure of the seaport town citizens to benzene emanating from petroleum handled through the terminal as one example, Goldstein reviewed a number of risk assessment issues. He noted that the risk assessment agenda has never been set by scientific experts but is always strongly affected by economic, political, and social issues.

He also pointed out that there are two often contradictory approaches used in regulatory science: consensus building, such as would be used on a scientific panel, and the confrontational or adversarial approach used in litigation. Both methods are an attempt to ascertain the truth, but the results are often quite different. "What's desired is often a yes-no answer, whereas the choices involve discrete differences between elements in a continuum," Goldstein said.

Goldstein pointed out that psychology is a strong element in perception of risk. During the polio epidemic of the 1950s, more children died of measles than of polio, but because measles was well known

and most children recovered from it, measles did not alarm people to the same degree. (As an aside, he mentioned that development of the polio vaccine paved the way for an equally effective measles vaccine.) Another example: radon gas does not excite people as much as other pollutants because there is no "bad guy," no one to blame because radon is a product of nature.

Cooper Receives Lilienfeld Prize

Glinda Cooper, the newest member of the NIEHS Epidemiology Branch, has won the 1994 Abraham Lilienfeld Prize, awarded annually by the Society for Epidemiologic Research for the best paper based on a doctoral dissertation. Cooper presented her paper, "Galactose Consumption, Metabolism, and FSH Concentrations in Women of Late Reproductive Age" at a plenary session of the society's annual meeting June 16 in Miami.

Lactose is a sugar found in milk and milk products and is composed of glucose and galactose. Galactose has been suggested to be toxic to the ovary. Cooper's study

examined the galactose consumption of 295 women approaching menopause (ages 38 to 49). Their blood was tested to determine levels of a specific transferase enzyme that breaks down galactose and for levels of FSH, follicle-stimulating hormone, that increase as ovarian function declines before menopause. Women who consumed six or more grams per day of galactose (about one glass of milk or a one-serving container of yogurt) had FSH levels 30% higher than those who consumed less than six grams per day. FSH concentrations were also 65% higher among smokers compared to nonsmokers. This study provides evidence of the sensitivity of the ovary to specific toxic agents, particularly during the years of naturally declining ovarian function that precede menopause.

"Dr. Cooper is the second NIEHS epidemiologist to be awarded this national prize," commented Allen Wilcox, chief of the Epidemiology Branch. "Dr. Andrew Rowland was the winner in 1990 for his work on fertility impairment among women occupationally exposed to nitrous oxide. We're very proud of both of these young researchers."

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