

Chapter 2

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The work of the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee on Smoking and Health was undertaken, organized, and pursued with independence, a deep sense of responsibility, and with full appreciation of the national importance of the task. The Committee's constant desire was to carry out in its own way, with the best obtainable advice and cooperation from experts outside its membership, a thorough and objective review and evaluation of available information about the effects of the use of various forms of tobacco upon the health of human beings. It desired that the Report of its studies and judgments should be unquestionably the product of its labors and its authorship. With an enormous amount of assistance from 155 consultants, from members and associates of the supporting staff, and from several organizations and institutions, the Committee feels that a document of adequate scope, integrity, and individuality has been produced. It is emphasized, however, that the content and judgments of the Report are the sole responsibility of the Committee.

At the outset, the Surgeon General emphasized his respect for the freedom of the Committee to proceed with the study and to report as it saw fit, and he pledged all support possible from the United States Public Health Service. The Service, represented chiefly by his office, the National Institutes of Health, the National Library of Medicine, the Bureau of State Services, and the National Center for Health Statistics, furnished the able and devoted personnel that constituted the staff at the Committee's headquarters in Washington, and provided an extraordinary variety and volume of supplies, facilities and resources. In addition, the necessary financial support was made available by the Service.

It is the purpose of this section to present an outline of the important features of the manner in which the Committee conducted its study and composed this Report. A retrospective outline of procedures and events tends to convey an appearance of orderliness that did not pertain at all times. A plan was adopted at the first meeting of the Committee on November 9-10, 1962, but this had to be modified from time to time as new lines of inquiry led into unanticipated explorations. At first an encyclopedic approach was considered to deal with all aspects of the use of tobacco and the resulting effects, with all relevant aspects of air pollution, and all pertinent characteristics of the external and internal environments and make-up of human beings. It was soon found to be impracticable to attempt to do all of this in any reasonable length of time, and certainly not under the urgencies of the existing situation. The final plan was to give particular attention to the cores of problems of the relationship of uses of tobacco, especially the smoking of cigarettes, to the health of men and women, primarily in the United States, and

to deal with the material from both a general viewpoint and on the basis of disease categories.

As may be seen in a glance at the Table of Contents of this Report, the main topical divisions of the study were:

- Tobacco and tobacco smoke, chemical and physical characteristics (Chapter 6) .
- Nicotine, pharmacology and toxicology (Chapter 7).
- Mortality, general and specific, according to age, sex, disease, and smoking habits, and other factors (Chapter 8).
- Cancer of the lungs and other organs; carcinogenesis; pathology, and epidemiology (Chapter 9).
- Non-neoplastic diseases of the respiratory tract, particularly chronic bronchitis and emphysema, with some consideration of the effects of air pollution (Chapter 10).
- Cardiovascular diseases, particularly coronary artery diseases (Chapter 11).
- Other conditions, a miscellany including gastric and duodenal ulcer, perinatal disorders, tobacco amblyopia, accidents (Chapter 12).
- Characterization of the tobacco habit and beneficial effects of tobacco (Chapter 13).
- Psycho-social aspects of smoking (Chapter 14).
- Morphological constitution of smokers (Chapter 15).

As the primary duty of the Committee was to assess information about smoking and health, a major general requirement was that of making the information available. That requirement was met in three ways. The first and most important was the bibliographic service provided by the National Library of Medicine. As the annotated monograph by Larson, Haag, and Silvette--compiled from more than 6,000 articles published in some 1,200 journals up to and largely into 1959--was available as a basic reference source, the National Library of Medicine was requested to compile a bibliography (by author and by subject) covering the world literature from 1958 to the present. In compliance with this request, the National Library of Medicine furnished the Committee bibliographies containing approximately 1100 titles. Fortunately, the Committee staff was housed in the National Library of Medicine on the grounds of the National Institutes of Health, and through this location had ready access to books and periodicals, as well as to scientists working in its field of interests. Modern apparatus for photo-reproduction of articles was used constantly to provide copies needed for study by members of the Committee. In addition, the members drew upon the libraries and bibliographic services of those institutions in which they held academic positions. A considerable volume of copies of reports and a number of special articles were received from a variety of additional sources.

All of the major companies manufacturing cigarettes and other tobacco products were invited to submit statements and any information pertinent to the inquiry. The replies which were received were taken into consideration by the Committee.

Through a system of contracts with individuals competent in certain fields, special reports were prepared for the use of the Committee. Through these

sources much valuable information was obtained; some of it new and hitherto unpublished.

In addition to the special reports prepared under contracts, many conferences, seminar-like meetings, consultations, visits and correspondence made available to the Committee a large amount of material and a considerable amount of well-informed and well-reasoned opinion and advice.

To deal in depth and discrimination with the topics listed above, the Committee at its first meeting formed subcommittees with much overlapping in membership. These subcommittees were the main forces engaged in collection, analysis, and evaluation of data from published reports, contractual reports, discussions at conferences, and from some new prospective studies reprogrammed and carried out generously at the request of the Committee. These will be acknowledged more fully elsewhere in this Report. The first formulations of conclusions were made by these subcommittees, and these were submitted to the full Committee for revision and adoption after debate.

At the beginning, and until the Committee began to meet routinely in executive session, it had the advantage of attendance at its meetings of observers from other Federal agencies. There were representatives from the following agencies: Executive Office of the President of the United States, Federal Trade Commission, Department of Commerce, Department of Agriculture, and the Food and Drug Administration. Serving as more than observers and reporters to their agencies, when they were present or by written communication, they supplied the Committee with much useful information.

There were an uncounted number of meetings of subcommittees and other lesser gatherings. Between November 1962 and December 1963, the full Committee held nine sessions each lasting from two to four days in Washington or Bethesda. The main matters considered at the meetings in October, November, and December 1963 were the review and revision of chapters, critical scrutiny of conclusions, and the innumerable details of the composition and editing of this comprehensive Report.