

Author's response to reviews

Title: Cancer mortality in IBM Endicott plant workers, 1969-2001: An update on a NY production plant

Authors:

Richard W Clapp (rclapp@bu.edu)
Jennifer K Hoffman (hoffmank@bu.edu)

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Author's response to reviews: see over

April 4, 2008

Dr. Philippe Grandjean, Editor
Environmental Health

Dear Dr. Grandjean,

In response to reviewer Andrew Watterson, we made the following changes: #1, we added the two words “the one” in the abstract, #2, we clarified that there were former IBM workers in the community meeting expressing concern about cancer in fellow workers, #3, we distinguished carcinogens from “probable carcinogens” in the Discussion, #4, we attempted to clarify that it was former IBM workers in Endicott who expressed desire for more information (see #2), #5, we omitted the partial list of codes, since these provide unnecessary detail, #6, we added Bender (2007), Mundt (2007) and Herrick (2005).

In response to reviewer Robert Herrick’s comment #1, we examined the work history dates of the cancer decedents in the files available to us and determined that over 87% had worked at the Endicott facility over five years and over 79% had worked there over ten years. Because of missing dates for some workers, this may actually be an underestimate but we are unable to go back to plant records and fill in some missing stop and re-start dates. Only 23% of the Endicott cancer decedents had ever worked any part of their IBM employment at another facility, according to files available to us. From this, we feel confident that the cancer decedents were predominantly employed five or more years at Endicott and therefore it is appropriate to refer to them as “Endicott workers” in the text.

In response to #2, we changed the text to say that the Endicott results were comparable to the IBM San Jose results.

In response to your request, we have re-ordered the text and added some language that conforms to the Research article guidelines. We appreciate all the reviewers’ suggestions and feel that the paper is strengthened as a result of the revisions. Please let me know if you have additional questions or suggestions.

Sincerely,
Richard W. Clapp, DSc, MPH