

Interview with Professor Valentin

- Q. Professor Valentin, what have you been doing in terms of the literature on this area of research?
- A. Well, in the past two years we have had a look at the world literature from the aspect of the effects of passive smoking from 1970 until now, 1978. I have here some tables compiled by us, and with these tables we are now in the process of checking what particle mass concentrations, carbon monoxide concentrations, nicotine content and finally, what amounts of irritants and odourous substances, are prevalent. And it has now become obvious that, although passive smoking generally leads to irritations, it does not lead to impairment of health.
- Q. Right; having now read this massive amount of literature on the subject, are there any reasons why smoking should be restricted in public places? Are there any scientific reasons?
- A. Well, in Germany we are faced with the problem that requests for a general smoking ban at the workplace are being made. As a scientist, however, in this case I am of the opinion that we must strictly differentiate between the effects of active smoking on humans - we know that chronic bronchitis and bronchial carcinoma and peripheral disturbances of the circulatory system occur more frequently. At this stage, however, impairments caused by passive smoking have not been scientifically proven. We have no clues which indicate that it leads to health impairments. It is true that some times, irritations but not health impairments, may occur.
- Professor Valentin repeats the second question because of the noise of a lawn mower down the street; here we go again;
- Q. Alright, could we have that second question again please - i.e. in view of what you have read in the literature.
- A. Oh yes, good - Well, in Germany, we have the same problem, i.e. certain authors demand that the smoking of tobacco at the workplace be prohibited; and so far we have no scientific basis for such a ban. In this regard, we have not found any clues in the world literature. As a matter of principle, as scientists we are of the opinion that with passive smoking, we have to differentiate between a irritation of the individual, and an impairment of health. And for the impairment of health, we have so far not been able to find any clues, although it is indeed possible that certain irritations occur in individual cases. And for this reason we are, like the lawyers, of the opinion that so far, the government is under no obligation to proclaim a general smoking ban at the workplace.
- Q. What harm can be done to a person in a normally ventilated room who is there for, say, eight hours with a smoker?
- A. Well, in Germany, we have two laws which ensure a certain standard of job hygiene at the workplace. Firstly there exists a workshop constitutional law and secondly, the so-called workplace regulation. In these, the size of work rooms is proscribed and furthermore, details regarding

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ventilation are also set out. And this, to a large extent, prevents any concentrations ever occurring at the workplace, which may lead to an impairment of health. We have test results for discotheques and bars and restaurants from a Swiss working group, all of which have insufficiently ventilated workrooms; it is obvious that certain irritations may occur there in a particular case.

- Q. Coming out of the literature, Professor, is there any evidence that a passive smoker may be harmed by being in a room with an active smoker?
- A. No, in this respect we cannot find any clues in the literature but, as a matter of principle, with this problem we must distinguish between the effects of passive smoke on a healthy person, and the effects of passive smoke on a sick person, e.g. one suffering from chronic bronchitis, or even a bronchial asthmatic. Naturally, such patients may be strongly irritated and may even be harmed occasionally in a wholly unfortunate situation, where that well-known drop hits the hot stone, don't you think?
- Q. I think I know what you have said. Is there any evidence of what percentage of people are allergic to cigarette smoke in one form or another?
- A. The percentage which then prevails? We have calculated that these risk groups lie below 1%.
- Q. Thank you, that's just one. The other question arises from that. It has been alleged - and you may have already answered this but I'll ask it another way: It has been alleged that a passive smoker, after a certain amount of time with a smoker, will have in fact smoked x number of cigarettes. Is there anything in the evidence to suggest that that is true?
- A. Well now, we have already heard these problems and this argument here in Germany, but we are of the opinion that it does not apply. Indeed, a very high dilution does occur in regulation workrooms. In face, workplaces are specified, and if these specifications are complied with, it will not be possible that he smokes several cigarettes as a passive smoker; one can exclude this, such an argument is most certainly incorrect. Indeed, the exact scientific measurements are here before us for particles, carbon monoxide, nicotine, irritants and odourous substances. And it has now become obvious that, in all cases, we are below the maximum workplace concentrations and also below the MIC-values (Maximum Immission Concentrations); these are not exceeded.

Thank you very much, Professor.

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