



ACTON, LONDON, W. 3.

TELEPHONE: SHEPHERDS BUSH 3111
TELEGRAMS: VANTERIA, TELEX, LONDON
INTERNATIONAL TELEX - LONDON 28683

PLEASE ADDRESS ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO THE COMPANY AND NOT TO INDIVIDUALS



YOUR REF.

PLEASE QUOTE OUR REF. Au/MP/ee

24th September, 1958.

Sir Ronald A. Fisher,
Department of Genetics,
University of Cambridge.

Dear Sir Ronald Fisher,

This letter relates to your letter on 'Cancer and Smoking' published in the issue of Nature of August 30th 1958.

I should explain that apart from a general interest in this subject as a smoker (though a pipe smoker) I have an immediate interest because of this Company's concern with diesel engines and the attempts in the past year or two to ascribe the increasing incidence of cancer of the lung to the exhaust products of diesel engines; this hypothesis appears to me to be supported by even less evidence than the hypothesis that smoking causes cancer.

I am rather puzzled by your suggestion that the fact that inhaling is rarer among patients with cancer of the lung than with other smokers indicates that inhaling tends to prevent the disease. It appears to me that it shows only that if one smokes it is more dangerous to believe that one does not inhale than that one inhales. What might establish a preventive action would be a comparison of the incidence of the disease amongst (a) non-smokers (b) smokers who believe that they inhale (c) smokers who believe that they do not inhale. If there is more evidence on this point than was implied in your letter I should be very grateful if you would let me know where it is to be found.

I may say that this objection to your 'prophylactic' hypothesis does not, in my view, weaken your hypothesis that the association between smoking and lung cancer is not a causal one and may well be explainable on genetic grounds.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'A.E.W. Austen'.

A.E.W. Austen
Chief Research Engineer.