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- [Publications](#)
- [Events](#)
- [FactsAndFears](#)

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- [Title](#)
- [Date](#)
- [Type](#)



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Overlooking the Obvious: Cigarette Smoke and Asthma

By Alicia M. Lukachko, M.P.H.
Posted: Tuesday, July 27, 1999

LETTER

Publication Date: July 27, 1999

To the Editor:

Holcomb B. Noble's article discussing the heavy burden of asthma faced by poor, largely minority children in New York City (News article, July 27, 1999) neglects to mention a prime trigger of children's asthma: cigarette smoke. Exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is known to increase severity of asthma symptoms, and to impair recovery following hospitalization of asthmatic children.

While the article overlooks the well-established effect of cigarette smoke in exacerbating asthma, it cites the largely unfounded role of pesticides twice. This inappropriate emphasis merely underscores our country's misplaced concern about the impact of trace levels of environmental chemicals, particularly pesticides, on disease. By doing so, the public is encouraged to attend to hypothetical concerns, often at the expense of real dangers such as cigarette smoking.

Source Notes:

Submitted to the New York Times—July 27, 1999

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Stier contrasted smokes and trans fats

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