Editor’s choice

Tobacco money, the BMJ, and guilt by association

Bans against smoking in public are ubiquitous. Cigarette smoke is irritating, and passive inhalation increases tobacco-related morbidity and mortality. Or perhaps not, say Enstrom and Kabat (p 569). Based on an analysis of data from the American Cancer Society, they conclude that the association “may be considerably weaker than generally believed.” A firestorm erupted when the BMJ published this article in May. The American Cancer Society released a stinging press statement. The BMJ received 130 Rapid Responses and was advised to issue a retraction. Two main concerns predominated. First, the authors acknowledged being funded by an organization tied to tobacco interests. At least one author had been a tobacco industry consultant.

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