

# Scientist: Air Pollutants Cause Lung Cancer

The dangers of cancer-producing chemical compounds in urban air are fully explored by Dr. Benjamin L. Van Duuren in the current issue of SCIENTIST AND CITIZEN.

Referring to many studies of urban air, Dr. Van Duuren emphasizes three conclusions:

1. The incidence of lung cancer has risen sharply in recent years, and continues to

rise.

2. There appears to be an "urban factor" involved in the incidence of lung cancer, NOT related to smoking.

3. Air pollutants have been shown to be carcinogenic (cancer-producing) in the laboratory.

Noting that white South Africans are the world's heaviest smokers, yet their

incidence of lung cancer is less than half that of Great Britain, the author cites many studies which show that concentrations of carcinogenic pollutants are much greater in urban than in rural areas.

"If unchecked, carcinogenic pollutants arising from combustion processes are bound to increase with time as the power and heating needs of the

world's growing population increases," Dr. Van Duuren warns.

He asks for "further studies to describe more completely the sources of pollutants, their chemical nature and biological properties, and ways of removing them. New and rapid analytical methods are needed for monitoring city air," for cancer-producing chemicals.

But he emphasizes that "control measures . . . need not wait on the outcome of further investigations. Both study and control can proceed together if the public is willing to act on what is now known."

Dr. Van Duuren is Director of the New York University Medical Center's Laboratory for Organic Chemistry and Carcinogenesis.