Letter to the Editor

Reply: Hookah, opium, and tobacco smoking in relation to ESCC

R Malekzadeh^{*,1}, D Nasrollahzadeh² and F Kamangar³¹Digestive Diseases Research Center, Tehran University of Medical Sciences, Shariati Hospital, Kargar Street, Tehran 14117, Iran; ²Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden; ³Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics, National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, MD, USA

British Journal of Cancer (2009) 100, 1016. doi:10.1038/sj.bjc.6604959 www.bjcancer.com

Published online 3 March 2009

© 2009 Cancer Research UK

Sir,

We thank Dr Chaouachi for his interest in our study. Dr Chaouachi suggests that the association of hookah and oesophageal cancer observed in our study (Nasrollahzadeh *et al*, 2008) may be due to smoking opium, rather than tobacco, by a hookah. Whereas this is a very interesting hypothesis, it is unlikely to explain the results associated with hookah use. The prevalence of hookah use in the study area is low, and only 5% of the study

population have used hookah ever. Smoking opium by hookah is not the custom of the local people in North East Iran. In addition, the high sensitivity (93%) of the study questionnaire for detecting opium use significantly decreases any misclassification of exposure to opium (Abnet *et al*, 2004). We think that the conclusion of our study, that every type of tobacco smoking with or without using opium is not a major contributor to oesophageal cancer risk in the study area of Golestan, remains valid.

REFERENCES

Nasrollahzadeh D, Kamangar F, Aghcheli K, Sotoudeh M, Islami F, Abnet CC, Shakeri R, Pourshams A, Marjani HA, Nouraie M, Khatibian M, Semnani S, Ye W, Boffetta P, Dawsey SM, Malekzadeh R (2008) Opium, tobacco, and alcohol use in relation to oesophageal squamous cell carcinoma in a high-risk area of Iran. *Br J Cancer* 98: 1857–1863

Abnet CC, Saadatian-Elahi M, Pourshams A, Boffetta P, Feizzadeh A, Brennan P, Taylor PR, Kamangar F, Dawsey SM, Malekzadeh R (2004) Reliability and validity of opiate use self-report in a population at high risk for esophageal cancer in Golestan, Iran. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev* 13: 1068–1070

*Correspondence: Professor R Malekzadeh;
E-mail: malek@ams.ac.ir
Published online 3 March 2009