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Good Samaritan Hosp, Suffern, N.Y.

Emphysema Is Linked To Cigarette Smoking

By Thomas O'Toole
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NEW YORK, Sept. 15—Cigarettes came under a new frontal assault today when two doctors blamed smoking for the rising tide of non-cancerous lung disease now afflicting an estimated two million Americans.

In particular, Dr. Joseph Forgacs of the Good Samaritan Hospital in Suffern, N.Y., and Dr. Walter Carll of the Pluff Run Research Farm in Hopkins, S.C., called cigarettes a leading cause of emphysema (pronounced em-fuh-seem-ah), a breath-robbing ballooning of the lungs considered the fastest-growing crippling disease in the United States.

The doctors told of their findings at a press conference here today. The disclosures met with skepticism but considerable curiosity in a brief survey of the scientific community.

Emphysema is believed to strike as many as 17,000 new victims and to take more than 15,000 lives every year—eight times the death toll of ten years ago.

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Dr. Forgacs and Carll, both of them specialists in fungal poisoning, said that they had brought on emphysema in animals by having them breathe in the smoke of cigarettes.

The smoke killed the mice the two men began working with at the Good Samaritan Hospital more than three years ago, and has taken the lives of eight of the 24 beagle dogs that Dr. Carll began to test six months ago at his farm in South Carolina.

Both men conceded that their research had not been confirmed by others. But they insisted that the lung ailments suffered by their test animals had been brought on by tobacco — in particular a pair of tobacco fungus growths that implanted poisons on the leaves during the growth or curing of the tobacco.

Autopsies of the dead animals revealed lungs that were afflicted with emphysema.

The two researchers forced mice and dogs to inhale smoke from some 250 brands of cigarettes as well as specially cured tobacco that had

been doped with two types of tobacco fungus.

One fungus is known as alternaria, the other as aspergillus niger. The alternaria is found "on just about every cigarette sold," Dr. Forgaes said.

"In any case, the average smoker will during a year about 50 per cent of the time smoke a cigarette as bad as those that the animals smoked."

The basic cause of emphysema remains unknown, but the U.S. Public Health Service, along with many private physicians, has begun to believe that cigarette smoking may be the ailment's leading-aggravator.

Emphysema comes from an abnormal distention of lung tissue and an obstruction of airway tubes leading in and out from the lung. The result is a loss of elasticity in the lung, and an entrapment of air within it that brings on labored breathing and a loss of stamina.

The press conference at which the two doctors announced their findings was a departure from normal scientific press briefings.

For one thing, the conference was called by the doctors themselves, who admitted they had no support—financial or moral—from the scientific establishment in government or academic circles. They said they had met the costs themselves.

"We've been preaching the possibility of fungal poisoning for years," said Dr. Forgaes, "but so few people have listened to us that we felt like St. John the Baptist preaching to the locusts in the desert."

