Author's response to reviews

Title: The Chernobyl Childhood Leukemia Study: Background & Lessons Learned
Authors: Martin C. Mahoney, Kirsten M. Moysich, Philip L. McCarthy, Jr., Richard C. McDonald, Valery F. Stepanenko, Robert W. Day, MD, Arthur M. Michalek

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Dear Professor Grandjean:

This letter is written in response to your recent correspondence regarding the status of our manuscript, noted above, submitted to Environmental Health: A Global Access Science Source. We thank you for your encouraging remarks, as well as the very positive comments from each of the reviewers.

We agree with your suggestion to change this submission from a Commentary to a Review. Accordingly we have revised the layout of this paper, including shortening the abstract and changing subheadings. It appears that this would be the first Commentary paper to be published in this journal -- as we were unable to identify other published reviews for comparison.

This revised manuscript is in accordance with instruction contained in the pre-acceptance checklist.

Our responses to the minor points raised in the review are summarized below:

Richard Clapp:

Comment #1 - In general, this is not a research paper, but more of an essay by researchers in which they reflect on their experiences conducting a research study in a unique historical moment. The research topic is of major significance, but this article does not give any of the research results and refers the reader to Reference 17, which is "In Press." It could be read as a companion piece to the main article when that is published, and there should be an updated link to the published article at some future point.

Response – Reference #17 refers to our manuscript describing the main results from the epidemiologic study – this paper currently remains under review. It appears that the EndNotes program inadvertently listed that paper as “in press.” This error has been corrected.

Comment #2. Minor points which should be corrected include a miss-spelling of "bomb" in Reference 9, the lack of the word "Press" at the end of Reference 17, and an alternative word in the final paragraph to the word "distinctive." I think "unique" conveys the authors meaning better than distinctive.

Response – corrections completed.

Jorgen H. Olsen:

Comment#1 - This is a well-written and operational summary of difficulties/challenges encountered while conducting a collaborative, international study of the relationship between exposure to chronic low doses of ionizing radiation (from the Chernobyl accident) and the incidence of acute leukemias in children residing in three republics of the former Soviet Union. The report does not include details on the study material, nor does it give study results as these are under evaluation and publication elsewhere. However, the most important organizational aspects of such a large undertaken are identified and discussed in this paper in a constructive and interesting fashion.

Response – not applicable.
Each of the editorial comments listed in your email note have been addressed.

On the title page, please remove the following:
- Header from all pages
- Running Title: Conducting Multi-National Epidemiology Research
- number of words: 3490
- number of references: 18
- number of tables: 1
- number of figures: 1
- file: lessonsfromChernobyl_081604.doc

Keywords
- Underlines (confuses the reader...they look like links)
- Degrees after author names

On that same page, please list the entire address and email address for each author (i.e. - Occupational Health Program, Harvard School of Public Health, Landmark Center, 3-102 East, 401 Park Drive, Boston, MA 02138 USA; jpinlabo@hsph.harvard.edu).

Address, telephone and fax can be removed from under corresponding author section. This author just has to be indicated without relisting.

The entire paper needs to be double-spaced and unjustified.

Acknowledgments sections needs to be moved to the end of the ms between the author’s contributions section and the references section.

Please either indent the paragraphs OR put a space between paragraphs.

Author’s contribution, Acknowledgements, and Conflict of Interest sections go after the main text and before the references. Please include a list of abbreviations.

Please fix reference #5 to meet journal requirements. In fact, all references need to be redone to strictly adhere to the format listed at http://www.ehjournal.net/info/instructions/.

Also:
- The “eastern” in Eastern Europe needs to be capitalized.
- Please limit to one space between words.
- This paper will not recount the events of the Chernobyl disaster, nor specific results of the investigation. Change “nor” to or, as in “it will not do this or this.” (However, this statement may need to be revised, given the manuscript category as ‘review’).
- The Consortium helped to bring structure and organization in a variety of areas, from assembling the principal investigators to creating Working Groups to empanelling External Advisory Boards. Working groups and external advisory panels should not be capitalized as they are not proper nouns.

Make sure, when listing three or more words, phrases, or clauses of roughly equal weight in syntax, that the last two items in the series are linked with a coordinating conjunction and preceded by a comma (i.e. - They issued us our eating utensils: a tin cup, a mess kit, a spoon, a knife, a fork, and a canteen.). Please make sure to fix this throughout your manuscript.

The figure must be submitted as only a figure. Figure number, title and description should be included in the appropriate section at the end of the ms. Please refer to http://www.ehjournal.net/info/instructions/ for instructions on figure set-up and submission.

In closing, we appreciate the prompt and constructive feedback from both the editorial team and the reviewers. We hope you will agree that this paper is now ready for publication.

Sincerely,

Martin C. Mahoney, MD, PhD