In their excellent and historical study on solid fuel use and lung cancer in Eastern/Central Europe and the United Kingdom, Lissowska et al. (1) found that cooking or heating with solid fuel increases risk for lung cancer and suggest that cooking with wood carries a higher risk than does cooking with coal. We got interested in the last point for two reasons. First, the evidence of association between lung cancer and exposure to smoke from wood combustion is not yet sufficiently robust (2), and this paper adds to the growing literature on the subject. Second, if cooking with wood carries a higher risk, then one would expect that lung cancer (in addition to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and acute respiratory infections) should be a major public health problem, especially among women, in many developing societies that depend heavily on wood for cooking.

Their findings may be related to the way exposure was assessed, because the real determinants of exposure to smoke from solid fuel combustion are not yet sufficiently robust (2), and this paper adds to the growing literature on the subject. Second, if cooking with wood carries a higher risk, then one would expect that lung cancer (in addition to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and acute respiratory infections) should be a major public health problem, especially among women, in many developing societies that depend heavily on wood for cooking.

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Editor’s note: In accordance with Journal policy, Lissowska et al. were asked if they wished to respond to this letter, but they chose not to do so.

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