Dear Editor,

On behalf of my co-authors we present an up-to-date comprehensive meta-analysis of the available evidence relating environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) exposure to lung cancer risk in never smokers, considering exposure from various sources, and illustrating the potential magnitude of the bias that can arise from confounding and misclassification of smoking. While it has been widely accepted for many years that ETS exposure causes lung cancer, and while our meta-analyses confirm there is a significant association with a number of indices of exposure, the analyses we present for smoking by the husband, the most commonly used index of ETS exposure, shows that adjustment for education and three dietary factors, coupled with correction for the fact that a proportion of self-reported never smokers actually are true ever smokers, reduces the association substantially and makes it become non-significant. Bearing in mind other issues with the evidence, which we discuss in detail, we regard the evidence of a causal relationship as unconvincing.

We hope that you will be able to accept our paper “Environmental tobacco smoke exposure and lung cancer – a systematic review” for publication in World Journal of Meta-Analysis.

Yours sincerely

Peter Lee