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Editor  
George D. Lundberg, M.D.  
JAMA  
515 N. State Street  
Chicago, IL 60610

To the Editor:

Enclosed please find a Letter to the Editor in response to an article in the June 3, 1992 issue of JAMA.

I certify that I have participated sufficiently in the conception and design of this work and the analysis of the data as well as the writing of the letter, to take public responsibility for it. I believe the letter represents valid work. I have reviewed the final version of the submitted letter and approve it for publication. Neither this letter nor one with substantially similar content under my authorship has been published or is being considered for publication elsewhere. If requested, I shall produce the data upon which the letter is based for examination by the editors or their assignees.

I certify that any affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with a direct financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in the letter (e.g., employment, consultancies, stock ownership, honoraria, expert testimony) are disclosed below.

In consideration of the action of the American Medical Association (AMA) in reviewing and editing this submission, the author undersigned hereby transfers, assigns or otherwise conveys all copyright ownership to the AMA in the event that such work is published by the AMA.

Yours sincerely,

Robert W. Maver, FSA

RWM:dib  
Enclosure

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To the Editor:

The timing of Saul Green's highly inaccurate June 3 Special Communication in JAMA, "Antineoplastons" - An Unproved Cancer Therapy", is odd. With 4 Phase II NCI sponsored trials imminent and in light of Green's professional affiliation with Grace Powers Monaco, who has been involved in litigation against Burzynski for the past five years, one would have hoped for a more probing peer review process from JAMA.

My own analysis of antineoplastons began in 1989. In my role as Director of Research for Mutual Benefit Life and subsequently Fortis Benefits Insurance Company, I was asked by our Group Claims Division to evaluate Dr. Burzynski's antineoplastons. My review of this treatment included multiple site visits to Dr. Burzynski's Houston based facilities accompanied by our Director of Medical Services - a board certified medical oncologist. After verifying a number of provocative remissions in appropriately diagnosed advanced cancers, our conclusion was that Dr. Burzynski's antineoplastons represent a most promising new approach to cancer that should be formally evaluated in independent clinical trials.

Our analysis was subsequently corroborated by a research team from the National Cancer Institute (NCI), who conducted a site visit October 4, 1991. After reviewing a best case series of antineoplastons in the treatment of brain tumors, it was the opinion of the NCI that antitumor activity was documented and that the conduct of Phase II trials was indicated

to determine a response rate.

On December 2, 1991, I attended the meeting on antineoplastons of the Decision Network Committee at the NCI in Bethesda, MD. There, a panel of twenty-two experts discussed the findings of the site visit team and voted to conduct four Phase II trials on brain tumors.

Green's pedantic ruminations are tedious when contrasted with NCI's direct site visit approach. It strains the imagination to conceive what purpose is served by publication of this poorly researched article.

Those of us in the insurance industry and elsewhere who are interested in finally getting at the only issue that matters--are antineoplastons efficacious for cancer, or not?--are eagerly awaiting the NCI trials.

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About the Author:

Robert W. Maver graduated from Brown University in 1975 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Applied Mathematics. He was admitted as a Fellow of the Society of Actuaries in 1980 and Member of the American Academy of Actuaries in 1985.

As Vice President and Director of Research for Mutual Benefit Life, he was responsible for identifying, investigating and evaluating innovative medical therapies and technologies that offer claim cost containment opportunities. Prior to this he was Vice President and Group Actuary responsible for pricing, reserving and financial reporting of all Group Life and Health products.