

The New York Times

October 30, 2013

Radiation Fears Are Real

To the Editor:

Re “Taming Radiation Fears” (Op-Ed, Oct. 22):

David Ropeik, a specialist on risk perception and risk communication, plays down the mass of scientific and medical literature that amply demonstrates that ionizing radiation is a potent carcinogen and that no dose is low enough not to induce cancer.

Large areas of the world are becoming contaminated by long-lived nuclear elements secondary to catastrophic meltdowns: 40 percent of Europe from Chernobyl, and much of Japan.

A New York Academy of Sciences report from 2009 titled “Chernobyl” estimates that nearly a million have already died from this catastrophe. In Japan, 10 million people reside in highly contaminated locations.

Children are 10 to 20 times more radiosensitive than adults, and fetuses thousands of times more so; women are more sensitive than men.

Radiation of the reproductive organs induces genetic mutations in the sperm and eggs, increasing the incidence of genetic diseases like diabetes, cystic fibrosis, hemochromatosis and thousands of others over future generations. Recessive mutations take up to 20 generations to be expressed.

HELEN CALDICOTT

Bermagui, Australia, Oct. 23, 2013

The writer is the pediatrician, author and antinuclear advocate.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: October 30, 2013

An earlier version of this letter misspelled the surname of the Op-Ed writer the letter was responding to. He is David Ropeik, not Kopeik.

