

COMMENTS CONCERNING EPA'S INTEGRATED SCIENCE ASSESSMENT (ISA) FOR
PARTICULATE MATTER (EXTERNAL REVIEW DRAFT-OCTOBER 2018)

Prepared by:

Jonathan M. Samet, MD, MS
Dean and Professor
Colorado School of Public Health
Aurora, Colorado
Jon.Samet@ucdenver.edu

Submitted March 27, 2019

Background

Having provided comments at the December 12, 2018 meeting of the Clean Air Scientific Committee (CASAC) as it considered the first draft of *Integrated Science Assessment (ISA) for Particulate Matter (PM)*, I now offer comments on the processes used by CASAC in its review of the ISA. These earlier comments are appended. I elaborate my background at some length below because of its relevance to my comments.

I offer comments from the professional perspective of being a pulmonary physician and epidemiological researcher who has carried out research on the health effects of indoor and outdoor air pollution and other environmental agents for decades. As a consequence of that research, I have been a member of numerous national and international committees concerned with the translation of scientific evidence into policy, including serving on various committees of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Science Advisory Board. To reiterate the earlier description of my background, with regard to PM, I was one of the Consultants to the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) for the review of the Criteria Document and Staff Paper that led to the 1997 PM_{2.5} National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS). I chaired CASAC from 2008 through 2012 and, while in this role, I led the reviews carried out for the PM NAAQS. During that review, the transition to the current suite of documents related to the NAAQS review process was completed, resulting in the Integrated Science Assessment (ISA), the Risk and Exposure Assessment (REA), and the Policy Assessment (PA). I provided guidance to the EPA staff concerning frameworks for assembling and evaluating evidence.

With regard to "accountability research", I chaired the first and second workshops on the topic for the Health Effects Institute (HEI), resulting in HEI Communications 11 and 15.

I have also been involved with providing guidance to EPA concerning revisions to the Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS), including incorporation of systematic review methodologies and judgments as to the strength of evidence. This guidance has come through three committees of the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine that I have chaired.

I have also participated in other activities involving evidence integration with the purpose of drawing causal conclusions. One long-standing model for weight-of-evidence approaches has been the reports of the Surgeon General on smoking and health; beginning with the landmark 1964 report, this series of reports, now numbering 36, has reached powerful conclusions on the causation of disease by active and passive smoking. As Senior Scientific Editor for the 2004 report, I led a recalibration of the methodology for causal inference applied in these reports, an approach then successfully used in a series of subsequent reports: the 2006 report on involuntary smoking, the 2012 report on youth, and the 50th anniversary 2014 report. More recently, I chaired the Working Group that revised the Preamble for the Monographs of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). That revision led to refinements to the IARC approach for evidence integration in order to better incorporate mechanistic evidence.

Since my term on CASAC ended, the EPA's now established approach for assembling and interpreting evidence with review from CASAC has proved effective. It has proved to be practicable in its implementation; it provides a transparent record of the concerns raised during the review, summarized in a letter to the Administrator; and changes in response to review are documented with a rationale provided; and its validity has not been questioned.

The Current CASAC Review of the ISA

Here, I complement my earlier comments, addressing the shift in approach for evidence assessment and inference that has been introduced with this review of the PM ISA. This shift was signaled by CASAC Chair, Dr. Tony Cox, in instructions to CASAC provided in advance of the December 12-13 meeting. In addition to making assignments related to charge questions, the memo directed the attention of the CASAC panel to a series of methodological and technical issues concerned with data analysis and interpretation of models, as well as to aspects of causal inference. The issues were posed as questions, representing additions to the charge questions provided by the EPA. Parallel comments were provided by Dr. Cox in the compendium of individual, pre-meeting comments dated December 10, 2018.

The final review comments submitted to EPA are extensive, providing useful comments on some issues, but pervasively, questions are raised concerning process that echo the earlier submissions, including the letter from Dr. Cox to the CASAC panel, the preliminary comments, and the letter submitted by Dr. Cox to Dr. John Vandenberg dated December 17, 2018. The intent is clear: to force a revision of the processes in place for the five-year review of the NAAQS. In its comments on the draft ISA, CASAC indicates that it does not find responsiveness to the methodological concerns raised in Dr. Cox's letter to Dr. Vandenberg.

Here, I do not offer a specific critique of the points raised by CASAC around methodologies for evidence identification and review, interpretation of models, and causal inference and classification of strength of evidence. My principal points are directed at process:

- I concur that methods for utilization of evidence in decision-making processes should not be static and that CASAC could usefully provide guidance on making changes in the approach used by EPA in meeting its charge for five-year reassessments of the NAAQS. Such changes should be measured and not disruptive as the EPA carries out the challenging task of reviewing the burgeoning evidence on PM (or other pollutants) on the timeline mandated by the Clean Air Act. If new approaches are to be adopted, then modifications cannot be made so far into the development of the ISA, as in this instance.
- The comments are described as "consensus" comments. Has there been sufficient discussion among CASAC members to assure that the comments do reflect a "consensus" view?
- Throughout EPA, evidence is the starting point for policy and regulations. A variety of approaches are used in evidence translation processes; the in-place processes for

NAAQS review have been considered exemplary and changes to them have sufficiently broad implications to merit in-depth review by the Science Advisory Board.

- And, if a change in a process that has proved functional through multiple NAAQS reviews is to be made, the methodology should be transitioned to an approach that is known to work. The questions posed to Dr. Vandenberg and the comments about process raised by CASAC appear to directly reflect the writings and formulations of Dr. Cox. Several publications cited in these documents appear to be the foundation for the suggested shifts in approach. These include:
 - Cox Jr, Louis Anthony Tony, and Douglas A. Popken. "Has reducing fine particulate matter and ozone caused reduced mortality rates in the United States?" *Annals of epidemiology* 25.3 (2015): 162-173. (13 citations)
 - Cox Jr, Louis Anthony. "Do causal concentration–response functions exist? A critical review of associational and causal relations between fine particulate matter and mortality." *Critical reviews in toxicology* 47.7 (2017): 609-637. (10 citations)
 - Cox, Louis, et al. "Applying nonparametric methods to analyses of short-term fine particulate matter exposure and hospital admissions for cardiovascular diseases among older adults." *International journal of environmental research and public health* 14.9 (2017): 1051. (3 citations)
 - Cox, Louis Anthony Tony. "Effects of exposure estimation errors on estimated exposure-response relations for PM_{2.5}." *Environmental research* 164 (2018): 636-646. (0 citations)
 - Cox Jr, Louis Anthony. "Modernizing the Bradford Hill criteria for assessing causal relationships in observational data." *Critical reviews in toxicology* 48.8 (2018): 682-712. (0 citations)

I note that these papers were published from 2015 to 2018. To date, using Google Scholar, I find few citations by others, the hallmark of peer recognition and of scientific significance. These papers have had insufficient time to be considered by the scientific community in-depth. The approach and underlying methods proposed by CASAC cannot be considered the current state-of-practice.

Papers by others are cited, but publication dates are also recent. These references point to future directions around estimation of effects, but cannot be considered as redefining the state-of-practice.

- While I served as Chair of CASAC, apparently in response to stakeholder concerns, panel members were asked not to participate in discussions of their own work because of the potential for perceived or actual conflict-of-interest. Does that restriction remain in force? If so, the chair's advocacy for his own work should be considered as inappropriate.

- A close read of the CASAC comments shows abundant points of criticism, but steps 1-8, listed on pages 8 and 9 do not offer a framework that represents a sufficiently well-specified system for EPA to move forward.
- Many of the CASAC comments directed at the ISA, would be more appropriately raised when CASAC considers the draft Health Risk and Exposure Assessment (HREA). For that analysis, considerations related to model construction and assumptions, forms of concentration-response relationships and potential confounding are critical. In fact, the CASAC comments conflate the broader and holistic processes used to assess weight-of-evidence overall with the emerging techniques for estimation of “causal effects” from the data from particular studies.
- Are changes in methodology for NAAQS review within the mandate of CASAC? CASAC is an *advisory* committee and its mandate under the Clean Air Act is to provide guidance to the EPA. While there is no proscription on CASAC’s taking a more active role, the approach taken with this ISA represents a substantial departure from prior CASAC panels.
- I was surprised to find comments about prior documents and CASAC reviews (e.g., lines 16-18, page 1). First, the present CASAC was not charged with reviewing prior documents, but the latest draft ISA; and second, what is the basis for this statement? Is this statement the view of the full panel? A further example can be found in Dr. Cox’s comments on pages A-14 to A-15, which offer an opinion, without evidential analysis, on the conduct of prior reviews and even on the expertise of prior CASAC panels.
- I concur with the sensible recommendation to expand the panel with consultants as originally planned. As I have commented previously the seven members of the chartered CASAC cannot hold the breadth of expertise needed to review this 1,881 page draft. As one outcome of this meeting, CASAC should identify the additional expertise needed, including at the least an experienced environmental epidemiologist, an expert in exposure sciences, and an environmental statistician.
- As a starting point for any substantive changes to the NAAQS review methodology, CASAC should consider requesting consultation with the full SAB and move towards workshops that would provide a proper venue for in-depth discussions. The issues considered here do not lend themselves to teleconferences. Solicitation of a report from the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine is an alternative to the SAB.

Bottom line: the NAAQS review is on a very tight timetable. CASAC has already been crippled by the restriction of the reviewers to the seven chartered members. Of the extensive comments provided by CASAC, many are useful, but a new draft ISA cannot be built around a still unspecified and untested framework for evidence evaluation and integration.

Clean Air Act Amendments of 1977 (42 U.S.C. § 7409(d)(2))
The Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee

(A) The Administrator shall appoint an independent scientific review committee composed of seven members including at least one member of the National Academy of Sciences, one physician, and one person representing State air pollution control agencies.

(B) Not later than January 1, 1980, and at five-year intervals thereafter, the committee referred to in subparagraph (A) shall complete a review of the criteria published under section 7408 of this title and the national primary and secondary ambient air quality standards promulgated under this section and shall recommend to the Administrator any new national ambient air quality standards and revisions of existing criteria and standards as may be appropriate under section 7408 of this title and subsection (b) of this section.

(C) Such committee shall also (i) advise the Administrator of areas in which additional knowledge is required to appraise the adequacy and basis of existing, new, or revised national ambient air quality standards, (ii) describe the research efforts necessary to provide the required information, (iii) advise the Administrator on the relative contribution to air pollution concentrations of natural as well as anthropogenic activity, and (iv) advise the Administrator of any adverse public health, welfare, social, economic, or energy effects which may result from various strategies for attainment and maintenance of such national ambient air quality standards.

PRIOR COMMENTS: SUBMITTED DECEMBER 11, 2018

COMMENTS CONCERNING EPA'S INTEGRATED SCIENCE ASSESSMENT (ISA) FOR
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Prepared by:

Jonathan M. Samet, MD, MS
Dean and Professor
Colorado School of Public Health
Aurora, Colorado
Jon.Samet@ucdenver.edu

Submitted December 11, 2018

Background

I write these comments from the professional perspective of being a pulmonary physician and epidemiological researcher who has carried out research on the health effects of indoor and outdoor air pollution for decades. My research has used the full range of epidemiological methods to assess associations of air pollution with health. As a consequence of my research background, I have been a member of numerous national and international committees concerned with the translation of scientific evidence into policy, including serving on various committees of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Science Advisory Board. With regard to Particulate Matter (PM), I was one of the Consultants to the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) for the review of the Criteria Document and Staff Paper that led to the 1997 PM_{2.5} National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS). I chaired CASAC from 2008 through 2012 and, while in this role, I led the reviews carried out for the PM NAAQS. During that review, the transition to the current suite of documents related to the NAAQS review process was completed, resulting in the Integrated Science Assessment (ISA), the Risk and Exposure Assessment (REA), and the Policy Assessment (PA). I provided guidance to the EPA staff concerning frameworks for assembling and evaluating evidence, drawing on my experience as editor and author for the reports of the Surgeon General on smoking and health and various committees of the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine that I chaired. Of these committees, the Committee on Research Priorities for Airborne Particulate Matter is particularly relevant, as the committee was tasked to identify the most critical scientific uncertainties around PM following the PM_{2.5} NAAQS, to develop a research agenda addressing these uncertainties, and to track progress in resolving these uncertainties.

Since my term on CASAC ended, the EPA's approach for assembling and interpreting evidence with review from CASAC has proved effective. The approach is well-established (Figure 1); provides a transparent record of the concerns raised during the review, summarized in a letter to the Administrator; and changes in response to review are documented with a rationale provided. The scope of the documents reviewed and the breadth of the scientific evidence has necessitated the augmentation of the seven chartered CASAC members with additional panelists and several cycles of revision and review of each consecutive document have been needed. The practice of expanding the panel beyond the chartered CASAC members is long-standing. For example, I attach a table taken from the June 13, 1996 Closure Letter on the Staff Paper from Dr. George Wolff, CASAC Chair, to Administrator Browner ([Link to Letter](#)). This informative table lists the 21 panel members and their expertise, reflecting the broad range of disciplines required for comprehensive review of the lengthy documents assembled for reconsidering a NAAQS (Table 1). That scope cannot be captured with the seven members of the chartered CASAC.

The sequence of the documents is consistent with usual risk assessment approaches: the ISA is concerned with hazard identification, providing an assessment of the strength of evidence for causation and a suite of outcomes for consideration in the REA. The approach to making judgments as to the causal nature of associations of PM with health outcomes draws on widely used approaches, embedded within various EPA guidelines and used by other entities, e.g., the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in evaluating the evidence on smoking and health. The REA considers selected health outcomes and assesses the burden of disease attributable to PM at current levels and levels that would prevail under various scenarios associated with changes in the NAAQS. The REA is a critical step in moving from the ISA and its identification of hazard to the PA, which guides the Administrator's decision-making.

This process has been in place for about a decade, undergoing small refinements. Generally, there is agreement that it has proved a workable approach to the complex task of moving from myriad scientific papers to the evidence that is most critical for possible revisions to the NAAQS. The Appendix to these comments includes a letter from seven former chartered CASAC members, supporting the current approach and offering concern about not expanding beyond these seven individuals.

The Current ISA Review

Over two days, December 12 and 13, the chartered CASAC members face the task of reviewing the draft PM ISA, numbering 1881 pages and occupying 19.4 megabytes. It was first released on October 23, allowing approximately 6 weeks for review by CASAC and the public. The CASAC has five general charge questions stemming from the "Back to Basics Process for Review of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards" and an additional eight, more specific, albeit challenging, questions. Examining the agenda, setting aside the time for administrative matters, presentations, and public comments, approximately 11 hours remain for the committee to do its work, including a writing session. The CASAC members will likely continue to refine their comments following the meeting, but this schedule for reviewing an enormous document cannot support the needed in-depth review.

With deference to the CASAC members, this mandated approach can at best result in a more superficial review and more cursory comments than achieved with the prior approach. As a first item on its agenda, CASAC should question the EPA staff on the new review approach and, specifically, how the consequences of this abbreviated process will be evaluated. Such questioning is justifiable, given how the review process has been altered and the implications of a hurried evaluation. The import of this first testing of the new review process needs to be fully understood.

The Current ISA

As noted, the current ISA is lengthy, reflecting the enormity of the literature. Quoting the ISA (P-10, line 18): "This ISA evaluates relevant scientific literature since the 2009 PM ISA...". Over that time period, the growth of the literature on PM and health alone has been substantial (Table 2). This table provides article counts from broad searches conducted on December 10, 2018 on topics relevant to this ISA. The scope of the literature available and considered is enormous with 2656 references cited in the first draft ISA.

Consider Chapter 5, *Respiratory Effects*, for example. This 340 page chapter covers a broad set of outcomes that are critically relevant to public health; the relevant literature covers particle characteristics and dosimetry, and findings from mechanistic, toxicological and epidemiological research. It covers not only PM_{2.5}, but also PM_{10-2.5} and ultrafine particles (UFP) across an array of health outcomes. There are 425 citations. The various lines of evidence are considered for each outcome and synthesized following the principles laid out in the Preface of the ISA. The ISA's findings reaffirm those of the 2009 ISA, without advancing conclusions with regard to the strength of evidence.

The CASAC review of this chapter should include panel members with expertise in lung toxicology, mechanisms of lung injury and epidemiology. Given the breadth of the outcomes considered, more focused expertise in some areas, e.g., asthma, is warranted. And, reviewers will likely need to examine some of the critical studies cited to assure that they have been correctly represented or to address study-specific concerns.

Are Refinements Needed?

Inevitably, any process for gathering, reviewing, and synthesizing evidence can be improved as experience is gained. While I have been supportive of the ISA as a format for gathering and reviewing evidence, new and more efficient approaches may be needed, particularly for PM and ozone, given the scope of the relevant literature. In the case of PM, by 2009, substantial evidence causally linked PM to a number of short-term and long-term adverse effects. These became the basis for the REA, an analysis supporting the PA and ultimately the Administrator's decision on NAAQS revision. When adverse effects of major public health concern have well documented causal links to PM, should the emerging literature be reviewed exhaustively? Could screening approaches be used to limit the number of comprehensive reviews considered in the ISA?

The REA remains a key step in developing evidence-based guidance for the Administrator. It would best be maintained as a free-standing document.

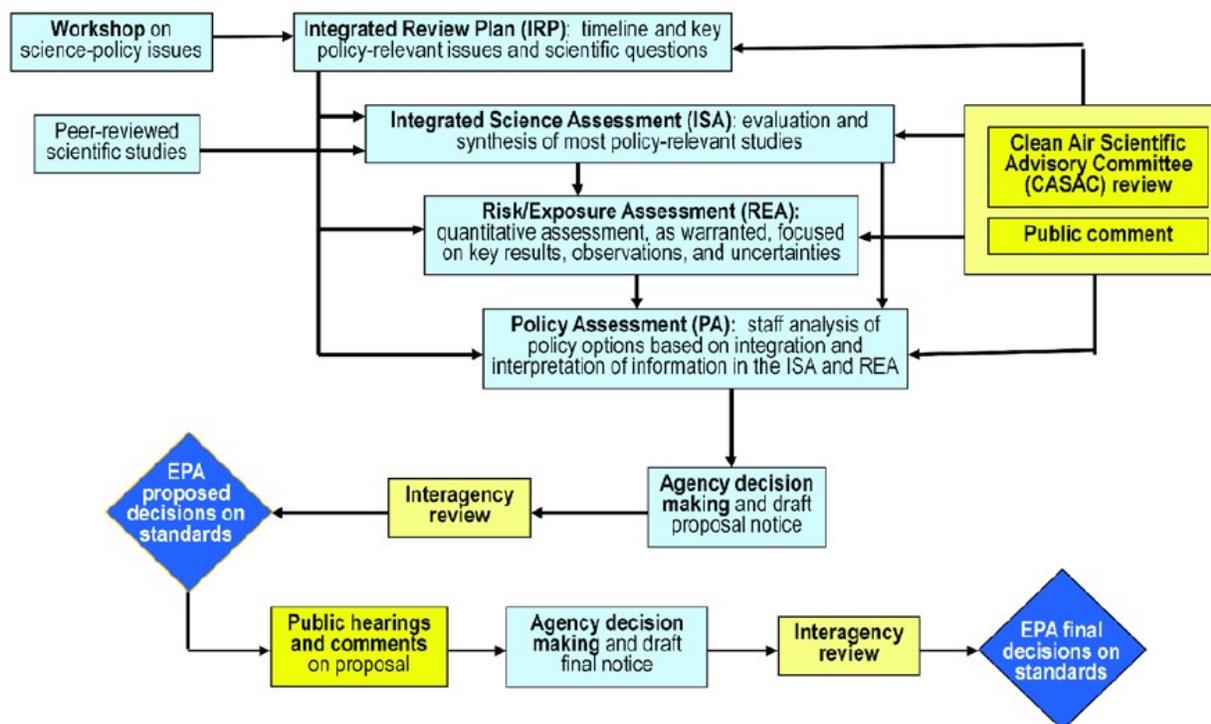
Conclusions and Recommendations

My comments concerning the formidable, if not impossible challenge, posed by review of the draft PM ISA have been echoed by others. Thus, with regard to the process for this review of the PM ISA, I recommend the following:

1. CASAC should provide its assessment of the feasibility and effectiveness of this accelerated review process, coinciding with not appointing consultant members to the PM panel. This first application of a new process should be closely scrutinized for its consequences.

2. The Science Advisory Board should undertake its own evaluation of the sweeping changes made to its review processes for the PM NAAQS and the consequences for the quality of its work.
3. The EPA staff need to continue to provide a written response to CASAC's principal comments; such documentation is critical if CASAC has only a single review meeting.
4. The size of the draft PM ISA contributes to the complexity of review, even without the changes to the review processes. The ISA was intended to be briefer and more integrative than the previous Criteria Documents. In that regard, the ISA has succeeded, but this approach to evidence gathering, evaluation, and synthesis is challenged by the enormity of the literature. Discussion is warranted as to how to scope the literature relevant to updating a NAAQS and to produce a sufficiently informative, but smaller document.

Figure 1. Schematic of the key steps in review of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards



U.S. EPA (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency). (2015). Preamble to the Integrated Science Assessments [EPA Report]. (EPA/600/R-15/067). Research Triangle Park, NC: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Research and Development, National Center for Environmental Assessment—RTP Division. <https://cfpub.epa.gov/ncea/isa/recordisplay.cfm?deid=310244>.

Table 1. [Summary of CASAC Panel Members Recommendations \(all units \$\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3\$ \), 1996](#)

		PM _{2.5} 24-hr	PM _{2.5} Annual	PM ₁₀ 24-hr	PM ₁₀ Annual
Current NAAQS		N/A	N/A	150	50
EPA Staff Recommendation		18 - 65	12.5 - 20	150 ¹³	40 - 50
Name	Discipline				
Ayres	M.D.	yes ²	yes ²	150	50
Hopke	Atmos. Sci.	20 - 50 ³	20 - 30	no	40 - 50 ⁴
Jacobson	Plant Biologist	yes ²	yes ²	150	50
Koutrakis	Atmos. Sci.	yes ^{2,5,6}	yes ^{2,5,6}	no	yes ⁴
Lamtz	Statistician	no	25-30 ⁷	no	yes ²
Legge	Plant Biologist	≥ 75	no	150	40 - 50
Lippmann	Health Expert	20 - 50 ³	15 - 20	no	40 - 50
Mauderly	Toxicologist	50	20	150	50
McClellan	Toxicologist	no ⁸	no ⁸	150	50
Menzel	Toxicologist	no	no	150	50
Middleton	Atmos. Sci.	yes ^{2,3,12}	yes ^{2,5}	150 ^{3,13}	50
Pierson	Atmos. Sci.	yes ^{2,9}	yes ^{2,9}	yes ⁴	yes ⁴
Price	Atmos. Sci./ State Official	yes ^{3,10}	yes ¹⁰	no ^{3,4}	yes ⁴
Shy	Epidemiologist	20 - 30	15 - 20	no	50
Samet ¹	Epidemiologist	yes ^{2,11}	no	150	yes ²
Seigneur	Atmos. Sci.	yes ^{3,5}	no	150 ¹³	50
Speizer ¹	Epidemiologist	20 - 50	no	no	40 - 50
Stolwijk	Epidemiologist	75 ⁷	25-30 ⁷	150	50
Utell	M.D.	≥ 65	no	150	50
White	Atmos. Sci.	no	20	150	50
Wolff	Atmos. Sci.	≥ 75 ^{3,7}	no	150 ³	50

¹ not present at meeting; recommendations based on written comments

² declined to select a value or range

³ recommends a more robust 24-hr. form

⁴ prefers a PM standard rather than a PM standard 10-2.5 10

⁵ concerned upper range is too low based on national PM /PM ratio 2.5 10

⁶ leans towards high end of Staff recommended range

⁷ desires equivalent stringency as present PM standards 10

⁸ if EPA decides a PM NAAQS is required, the 24-hr. and annual standards 2.5 should be 75 and 25 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, respectively with a robust form

⁹ yes, but decision not based on epidemiological studies

¹⁰ low end of EPA's proposed range is inappropriate; desires levels selected to include areas for which there is broad public and technical agreement that they have PM pollution problems 2.5

¹¹ only if EPA has confidence that reducing PM will indeed reduce the components 2.5 of particles responsible for their adverse effects

¹² concerned lower end of range is too close to background

¹³ the annual standard may be sufficient; 24-hr level recommended if 24-hour standard retained

Table 2. PubMed Literature Search Results for Report Key Terms, 2009 – present

Search Term(s)	Number of Citations
Epidemiology and particulate matter	6639
Epidemiology AND particulate matter AND respiratory effects	1461
Epidemiology AND particulate matter AND respiratory health	1231
Epidemiology AND particulate matter AND cardiovascular disease	1406

APPENDIX

Andrew Wheeler

Acting Administrator

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20460

RE: Proposed changes to Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) review process

December 10, 2018

Acting Administrator Wheeler:

We write as past members of the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC) of the Science Advisory Board of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to express concern about the announced approach for CASAC review of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS), which eliminates the comprehensive peer review process that evaluates evidence related to the NAAQS and replaces the process with a single seven-person panel, comprised of the chartered CASAC members. Several of those signing this letter have served as Chair of CASAC (Samet, Frey, Hopke, Diez Roux), and we have expertise in the health effects of air pollution, coming from our research and patient care activities, as well as a range of disciplines pertinent to the NAAQS review. As a primary concern, we are united in suggesting that a seven-person panel cannot review and evaluate the documents prepared by the Agency in the process for consideration of revisions to the NAAQS. We are deeply concerned that eliminating the CASAC panels will lead to superficial reviews that will not have the needed scientific depth. The chartered CASAC, simply based on its number, cannot span the scope of science considered by the EPA as it guides the Administrator in assuring that the NAAQS will protect human health with an adequate margin of safety, as mandated by the Clean Air Act. Furthermore, for the current ozone and particulate matter reviews, the EPA is proposing a rushed schedule, which will reduce transparency, opportunity for public input, and the quality of the review.

Those signing this letter are in agreement that the CASAC peer review process was not “broken”; quite to the contrary, an effective process had been established that led to high-quality and timely peer review that has directly informed NAAQS revisions. Scientific evidence has been the foundation for NAAQS revision and peer review is fundamental to the translation of scientific evidence into standards to protect the public health. The CASAC panels have typically included 14-15 members beyond the chartered CASAC to have the full range of expertise needed to cover the Integrated Science Assessment (ISA), Risk and Exposure Analysis (REA), and Policy Analysis (PA) documents. The range of topics to be covered includes atmospheric sciences, exposure sciences, toxicology, epidemiology and statistics, risk assessment, and

ecological and human welfare effects. For the most critical areas, such as epidemiology, several expert panel members have been included in the pollutant-specific review panels.

With these numbers and breadth of expertise, CASAC panels have provided comprehensive reviews that are then summarized by the CASAC Chair and approved by the chartered CASAC before transmittal to the Administrator. CASAC has been augmented with additional expert scientists to form review panels for over three decades. The role of the chartered CASAC, and additional scientists added to complete pollutant-specific panels, is well specified in the series of documents developed by the EPA in support of NAAQS revision (see Figure 1 below from the 2013 ISA for Ozone). CASAC has recognized that the EPA documents need to be adequate for their intended purpose. In our experience, peer review by CASAC has resulted in substantial revisions by the EPA. In the past, CASAC typically provided two cycles of peer review per document, as each document was revised in response to CASAC comments.

We are deeply concerned that eliminating these levels of peer review and expertise will deprive the EPA of essential, independent scientific guidance that is needed to set NAAQS that are protective of human health. We request the opportunity to speak with the EPA's leadership on the process by which CASAC provides scientific input to the agency as the NAAQS are revised. Collectively, we have provided years of service to the agency on CASAC and its panels. We are hopeful that the tradition of assuring the best possible peer review will be maintained.

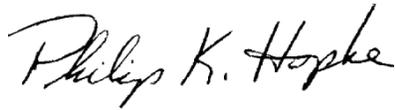
Sincerely,



Jonathan M. Samet, M.D., M.S.
Dean and Professor
Colorado School of Public Health
CASAC Chair 2008-2012



H. Christopher Frey, Ph.D.
Glenn E. Futrell Distinguished University Professor
North Carolina State University
CASAC Chair 2012-2015



Philip K. Hopke

Bayard D. Clarkson Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Clarkson University
Adjunct Professor, Department of Public Health Sciences
University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry
CASAC Chair 2000-2004



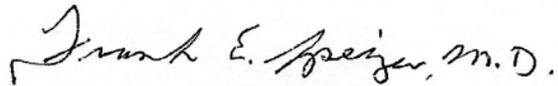
Ana V. Diez Roux, M.D. Ph.D.

Dean and Distinguished University Professor of Epidemiology, School of Public Health
Drexel University
CASAC Chair 2015-2017



James D. Crapo, M.D.

Professor of Medicine, Department of Medicine
National Jewish Health
University of Colorado Denver



Frank Speizer, M.D.

Edward Kass Professor of Medicine
Channing Laboratory
Harvard Medical School



Joseph D. Brain, S. D. in Hyg.

Cecil K. and Philip Drinker Professor of Environmental Physiology
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

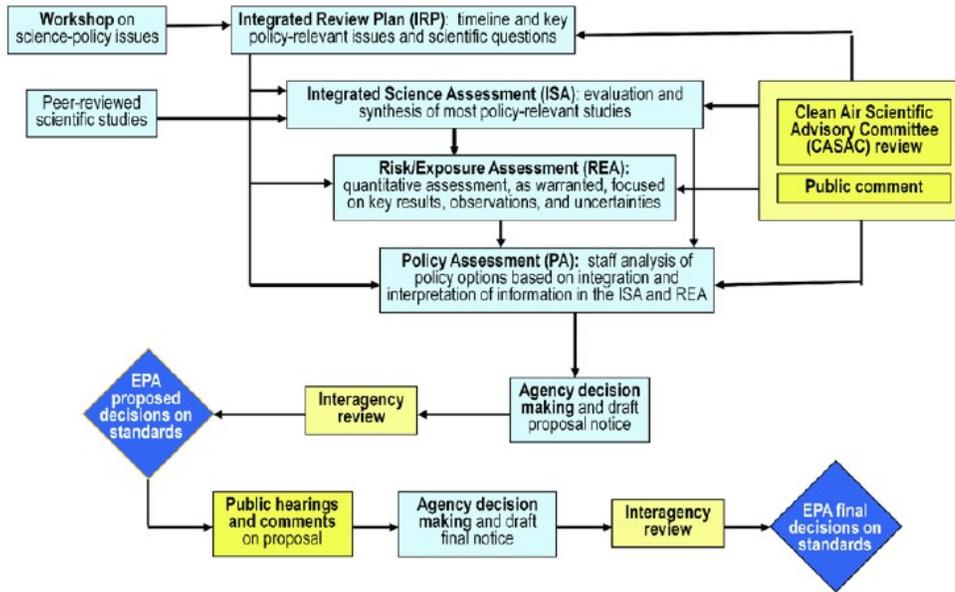


Figure 1 Illustration of the key steps in the process of the review of National Ambient Air Quality Standards.