Last week, I told you about the British physician study conducted by Dahl and Hill. What he didn't tell you is that they had conducted another study prior to that that began in 1948 and was published in 1950. The first study was a case control study, which uses a very different strategy from the prospective cohort study that they later conducted.

The case control study was conducted by searching 20 London hospitals to find patients who had been admitted for treatment of lung cancer. These were the cases. And for a comparison group, they enrolled patients who had been admitted to the same hospitals for treatment of diseases other than cancer. These were the controls.

They then had their staff interview all cases and controls asking them the same standardized set of questions regarding their demographics, health, smoking habits, and many other exposures. They found that smoking was much more prevalent in the lung cancer cases than in the control subjects. And the final report provided evidence of a very strong association between smoking and lung cancer. The case control design is particularly useful in certain circumstances. And this week we'll begin to take a look at this design, including its advantages and its limitations.