TABLE 5
Summary of Likelihood of Cancer Risk and Summary Risk Estimate (95% CI) Across All Types of Studies for All Cancers

Cancer Site	Likelihood of Cancer Risk by Criteria	Summary Risk Estimate (95% CI)	Comments
Multiple myeloma	Probable	1.53 (1.21–1.94)	Consistent with mSMR and PMR (1.50, 95% CI = 1.17–1.89) Based on 10 analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level
Non-Hodgkin lymphoma	Probable	1.51 (1.31–1.73)	Only two SMR and another PMR studies Slightly higher than mSMR and PMR (1.36, 95% CI = 1.10–1.67) Based on eight analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level
Prostate	Probable	1.28 (1.15–1.43)	Consistent with mSIR (1.29, 95% CI = 1.09–1.51) Based on 13 analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level
Testis	Possible	2.02 (1.30–3.13)	Slightly higher than mSIR (1.83, 95% CI = 1.13–2.79) Based on four analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level
Skin	Possible	1.39 (1.10–1.73)	Slightly lower than mSMR and PMR (1.44, 95% CI = 1.10–1.87) – derived on basis of PMR studies Based on eight analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level
Malignant melanoma	Possible	1.32 (1.10–1.57)	Slightly higher than mSMR and PMR (1.29, 95% CI = 0.68–2.20) Based on 10 analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level
Brain	Possible	1.32 (1.12–1.54)	Slightly higher than mSMR and PMR (1.27, 95% CI = 0.98–1.63) Based on 19 analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level; there was heterogeneity among SMR studies
Rectum	Possible	1.29 (1.10–1.51)	Slightly lower than mSMR and PMR (1.39, 95% CI = 1.12–1.70) Based on 13 analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level
Buccal cavity and pharynx	Possible	1.23 (0.96–1.55)	Slightly higher than mSMR (1.18, 95% CI = 0.81–1.66) Based on nine analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level
Stomach	Possible	1.22 (1.04–1.44)	Lower than mSIR (1.58, 95% CI = 1.12–2.16) Based on 13 analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level
Colon	Possible	1.21 (1.03–1.41)	Slightly lower than mSMR and PMR (1.31, 95% CI = 1.08–1.59) Based on 25 analyses Heterogeneity—significant at the 10% level; there was heterogeneity among SMR and PMR studies
Leukemia	Possible	1.14 (0.98–1.31)	Similar to mSMR and PMR (1.14, 95% CI = 0.92–1.39) Based on eight analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level
Larynx	Unlikely	1.22 (0.87–1.70)	Higher than mSMR (0.58, 95% CI = 0.25–1.15) Based on seven analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level
Bladder	Unlikely	1.20 (0.97–1.48)	Similar to mSMR and PMR (1.24, 95% CI = 0.83,1.49) Based on 11 analyses Heterogeneity—significant at the 10% level; there was heterogeneity among SMR studies
Esophagus	Unlikely	1.16 (0.86–1.57)	Higher than mSMR (0.68, 95% CI = 0.39–1.08) Based on eight analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level
Pancreas	Unlikely	1.10 (0.91–1.34)	Slightly higher than mSMR (0.98, 95% CI = 0.75–1.26) Based on 13 analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level
Kidney	Unlikely	1.07 (0.78–1.46)	Similar to mSMR and PMR (1.23, 95% CI = 0.94–1.59) Based on 12 analyses Heterogeneity—significant at the 10% level; there was heterogeneity among SMR studies

(*Continued*)

TABLE 5
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Cancer Site	Likelihood of Cancer Risk by Criteria	Summary Risk Estimate (95% CI)	Comments
Hodgkin's disease	Unlikely	1.07 (0.59–1.92)	Higher than mSMR (0.78, 95% CI = 0.21–2.01) Based on three analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level
Liver	Unlikely	1.04 (0.72–1.49)	Similar to mSMR (1.00, 95% CI = 0.63–1.52) Based on seven analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level
Lung	Unlikely	1.03 (0.97–1.08)	Similar to mSMR and PMR (1.05, 95% CI = 0.96–1.14) Based on 19 analyses Heterogeneity—not significant at the 10% level; there was heterogeneity among PMR studies
All cancers	Unlikely	1.05 (1.00–1.09)	Similar to mSMR and PMR (1.06, 95% CI = 1.02–1.10 Based on 25 analyses Heterogeneity—significant at the 10% level; there was heterogeneity among SMR studies

CI indicates confidence interval; SMR, standardized mortality ratio; PMR, proportional mortality ratio; SIR, standardized incidence ratio.

SIR = 1.39, 95% CI = 0.2–5.0; 11 to 20 years: SIR = 4.03, 95% CI = 1.3–9.4. In those exposed greater than 20 years, the risk estimate remained elevated but declined (SIR = 2.65, 95% CI = 0.3–9.6), possibly because testicular cancer generally occurs at a younger age. Bates et al[30] argued that, although the reason for the excess risk of testicular cancer remained obscure, the possibility that this is a chance finding was low because incident studies are likely the most appropriate methodology for a cancer that can be successfully treated.

The 1990 findings of Howe and Burch[4] showing a positive association with brain cancer and malignant melanoma are compatible with our results because both had significant summary risk estimates. Brain cancers were initially scored as probable but then downgraded to possible (Table 5). There was inconsistency among the SMR studies, which resulted in the use of the random-effects model, yielding confidence limits that were not significant (SMR = 1.39, 95% CI = 0.94–2.06) (Table 2). This inconsistency primarily resulted from the Baris et al study,[13] a 61-year follow up of 7789 firefighters demonstrating a marked reduction in brain cancer (SMR = 0.61, 95% CI = 0.31–1.22). As noted in Table 4, however, there were elevated, but not significant, risk estimates across all studies, ie, mSMR, mPMR, mRR, and mSIR. This consistency is all the more remarkable given the diversity of rare cancers included in the category "brain and nervous system." Furthermore, there was a 2003 study by Krishnan et al[65] published after our search that examined adult gliomas in the San Francisco Bay area of men in 35 occupational groups. This study showed that male firefighters (six cases and one control) had the highest risk with an odds ratio of 5.93, although the confidence intervals were wide and not significant. In addition, malignant melanoma was also initially scored as probable but was downgraded to "possible" due to study type. This study downgrade was related to the negative SMR (−) and reliance primarily on a PMR study. Thus, in conclusion, our study supports a probable risk for multiple myeloma, similar to Howe and Burch's[4] findings, and a possible association with malignant melanoma and brain cancer.

Summary

We implemented a qualitative three-criteria assessment in addition to the quantitative meta-analyses. Based on the more traditional quantitative summary risk estimates shown in Table 5, 10 cancers, or half, were significantly associated with firefighting. Three cancers were designated as a probable risk based on the quantitative meta-risk estimates and our three criteria assessment. These cancers included multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and prostate. A recommendation is also made, however, for upgrading testicular cancer to "probable" based on the twofold excess summary risk estimate and the consistency among the studies. Thus, firefighter risk for these four cancers may be related to the direct effect associated with exposures to complex mixtures, the routes of delivery to target organs, and the indirect effects associated with modulation of biochemical or physiologic pathways. In anecdotal conversations with firefighters, they report that their skin, including the groin area, is frequently covered with "black soot." It is noteworthy that testicular cancer had the highest summary risk estimate (2.02) and skin cancer had a summary risk estimate (1.39) higher than prostate (1.28). Certainly, Edelman et al[3] at the World Trade Center, although under extreme conditions, revealed the hazards that firefighters may encounter only because air monitoring was performed.