

HHS Secretary Heckler Announces Cancer Prevention Awareness Program

At a Mar. 6 press conference, Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Margaret M. Heckler announced a new, on-going effort under National Cancer Institute (NCI) to save lives entitled the Cancer Prevention Awareness Campaign.

Effort is part of NCI goal to reduce cancer deaths by 50 percent of today's level by year 2000, thus saving 200,000 lives per year. Prevention alone could account for almost half of that total. However, according to a national survey by NCI last summer, perceptions about cancer among general public have failed to keep pace with the progress of medical science.

"Too few Americans realize the simple truth that cancer is usually caused by the way we live, and its risk can be reduced by the choices we make," Secretary Heckler said in announcing new information campaign. Program aims at saving 75,000 lives per year through reduced smoking by year 2000, plus 20,000 lives per year by turn of century through improved diet, including more fiber and lower fat content. In addition to prevention gains, it is predicted 105,000 lives would be saved through improved use of cancer treatments.

"Recently our research has come together compellingly to show how closely cancer is associated with our lifestyle choices," said Heckler. "We know that fully 80 percent of cancer cases are linked to lifestyle and environmental factors. And we know that the most important causes of cancer are the ones we can control or influence. We are not always at the mercy of our environment."

Some 30 percent of all cancer deaths are related to smoking, and 35 percent can be traced to dietary factors, especially low-fiber and high-fat diets. Other factors include alcohol, 3 percent; virus, 5 percent; occupational exposures, 4 percent; excess sunlight, 3 percent; environmental pollution, 2 percent; food additives, 1 percent or less. However, Americans are still unaware of opportunities for preventing cancer. In last summer's NCI survey, about 49 percent of respondents failed to identify individual prevention as a way to reduce cancer risk. About 46 percent agreed with statement, "there is not much a person can do to prevent cancer."

Secretary Heckler said the Cancer Prevention Awareness Campaign will consist of two phases, first, a general information campaign, beginning immediately and culminating in a nationwide media effort during first week of June, and a second phase targeting cancer prevention information on those most at risk.

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public health specialists, legislators and other public officials. "This conference will be valuable for anyone interested professionally and academically in the fields of occupational disease and compensation," according to Dr. Irving Selikoff, president of the Collegium Ramazzini.

For further information on the International Conference on *Disability Compensation for Occupational Disease*, contact the New York State Workers' Compensation Board, Office of Communication, Information and Education, Room 4099, 2 World Trade Center, New York, N.Y. 10047.

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UPCOMING MEETINGS OF INTEREST

... Symposia on "Hazard Communication: Training and Educating the Worker"; Apr. 24, Sheraton Crown Plaza, Houston, TX - June 14, Westin Bellevue Stratford, Philadelphia, PA - Sept. 25, Hyatt on Union Square, San Francisco, CA; Speakers will discuss practical approaches to developing good training program and ways of coping with OSHA's Hazard Communication Rule; Sponsored by Chemical Manufacturers Association; Registration fee: $85; Melissa M. Winter, CMA, 2501 M. St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037/(202) 887-1283.

... 1984 Asbestos Symposium; Mar. 19-23, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA; Program includes courses and general session on asbestos in buildings; Symposium is coordinated by Georgia Tech and other interested parties; General session: $100, Courses range from $150 to $325; Department of Continuing Education-R, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA 30332/(404) 894-2400.

HOUSE SUPERFUND AMENDMENTS ADDRESS TOXIC TORT COMPENSATION

A bill introduced in the House of Representatives last month by Representative James J. Florio (D-NJ) to amend the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, popularly known as the Superfund Act, includes provisions to compensate private parties for injuries resulting from exposures to hazardous substances. The bill, H.R.4813, would also make Superfund, currently set to expire in Sept. 1980, a permanent program and would expand the list of chemical feedstocks which are taxed to finance the fund.

Under proposed amendments, a rebuttable presumption would arise that the claimant is eligible for relief if exposure to a hazardous substance, actual injury, and a "reasonable likelihood" that such exposure could cause or significantly contribute to injury are shown. Exposure could be caused by a facility at which a hazardous substance was stored, treated, recycled, or disposed or from which it migrated, or as a result