

Draft

January 27, 1983

Food Additives Evaluation Branch (HFF-156)

Literature on the Relationship of Asbestos in Talc to Ovarian Cancer

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Division of Regulatory Guidance (HFF-314)

This is in response to your memo of January 19, 1983 with an attached letter from Joan M. Pankey of The Johns Hopkins Oncology Center (dated 1/14/83), which requested literature on ovarian cancer and talcum powder.

DT files do not contain any literature on the requested topic. It is not clear from the letter what type of exposure to talcum powder is being asked about, but I assume inhalation. DT files pertain mostly to oral ingestion of asbestos and/or talc. I did find a statement in a chapter in "Chemical Carcinogens", C.E. Searle, ACS Monograph 173, Washington, D.C. (1976) that mentioned ovarian tumors and asbestos. It stated "Prospective surveys of occupational groups exposed to asbestos have in general shown a small excess risk of some other types of cancers (in addition to bronchial and mesothelial), especially those of the gastrointestinal tract and ovarian tumors. The excess of these tumors is relatively small compared with that

for bronchial cancer". No reference was given for this statement, however.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer evaluated asbestos in 1976 (IARC Monograph - Vol. 14). No reference was made to any relationship between ovarian cancer and asbestos exposure in this report. A literature search on asbestos was performed by EPA in 1978 and Ms. Pankey may wish to purchase a copy from the National Technical Information Service (order number PB-286 - 486 - Asbestos, a bibliography). You might also suggest she run another literature search to identify more recent articles.

Most of the data in the literature relate to occupational exposure (inhalation) to high levels (relative to the general population) of asbestos. Our concern at the Bureau of Foods is in identifying the effects of low levels of exposure to asbestos from oral ingestion. Studies addressing the oral route of exposure to asbestos are under investigation. I suggest you contact Dr. Hortense Macon of the GRAS Review Branch (HFF-335) for the current status of these feeding studies.

LLT

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