FILE NAME: Talc (TALC)

DATE: 1972 Apr 6

DOC#: TALC061

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: Letter to Barry Castleman from the FDA

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20204

April 6, 1972

Mr. Barry I. Castleman
Division of Air Pollution and
Industrial Hygiene
Bureau of Environmental Services
Baltimore County Department of Health
Maryland Avenue and Hillen Road
Towson, Maryland 21204

Dear Mr. Castleman:

Your inquiry of March 22, 1972 to Dr. John Palmer concerning asbestos has been referred to me for reply.

The Food and Drug Administration is aware of the asbestos problem and we have been studying it intensively for the past year. There is some difficulty in identifying asbestos in talc since they are chemically the same and much of our effort has been directed to the development of methods for the analysis of talcum powders for the presence of this contaminant. We now have several methods which we are preparing to apply to commercially available talcs. We do not anticipate that the air levels of asbestos fibers incident to the use of talc will be anywhere near the tolerance level established for industrial exposure (see attached FR statement of January 12th) but are planning research to determine this point.

A proposal has been published to ban asbestos coats and other garments except in those circumstances where asbestos clothing is necessary for fireproofing. A copy of this proposal is also enclosed (February 18th).

Building materials as such do not come directly within the purview of the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act. If no other agency is prepared to deal with this problem it is possible that the Hazardous Substances Act could be stretched to cover it, however we would require advice from our General Counsel before attempting any action in this area.

In addition to the above problems we are also investigating the incidence and significance of asbestos fibers in liquid drugs and beverages.

I hope this is the information you desire.

Sincerely yours,

John M. Gowdy

John M. Gowdy, M.D.
Assistant Director for Medical Review
Division of Colors & Cosmetics Technology
Office of Product Technology

Enclosures