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RICHARD L. DAVIS  
Regional Director

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Mr. Joseph T. Seawell  
Manufacturing Chemists Assoc.  
1825 Connecticut Ave., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20009

Dear Mr. Seawell:

We are nearing completion of the Final Report of the Mortality Study of Vinyl Chloride Workers. In a recent telephone conversation with Dr. Torkelson, Dr. Cooper and he agreed that this study should be reported to the scientific community through an appropriate medium. An excellent opportunity for presentation of such a paper will take place in San Francisco in September when the Occupational Health In The Chemical Industry (Medichem) Group holds its fifth International Conference. (See attached letter). This year's program chairman is Dr. D. J. Kilian of Dow Chemical Company. Dr. Cooper is prepared to present the paper with the concurrence of the Manufacturing Chemists Association.

We believe this meeting also presents an excellent forum for a second paper, but that one would require sponsorship for its preparation. Three and one-half years ago, vinyl chloride and a then little known word - angiosarcoma - broke into the public and trade press in a most dramatic fashion. Since that time, literally hundreds of thousands of words about these subjects have appeared in the public and trade press. Even noted members of the scientific community have been quoted about the "vinyl chloride catastrophe" and the "angiosarcoma epidemic."

In the Annals of The New York Academy of Sciences, Volume 271, Dr. Joseph K. Wagoner states,

"Perhaps the most striking example of the problem we face in the future arose one year ago, when it was learned that vinyl chloride, a petrochemical gas used for the past 35 years as an ingredient in the manufacture of many plastics, is also a potent cancer-producing agent of the liver and possibly other organs as well. It is estimated that as many as several hundred thousand workers in the United States may be exposed to this agent in the workplace alone. It is not known how many tens of thousands of people exposed to vinyl chloride as a result of everyday living in near proximity to a facility where vinyl chloride or polyvinyl chloride are made. It is not known how many hundreds of thousands of people have been exposed to vinyl chloride as a result of using aerosol sprays that employed the chemical as a propellant and solvent. Equally unknown, of course, are the biological consequences of what these exposures will be."



Experience during the past three and one-half years does not indicate that such emotional and extravagant statements are warranted. In January of 1974, no statistics were available on the extent of angiosarcoma in the general population. One expert was asked how many were likely to occur during a year in the United States and he replied that there are normally about twenty-five. That number has become fixed, and it is still used to compare the number which occurred at a single plant. The fact is that no one knows how many might be expected to occur in the absence of vinyl chloride; therefore actual numbers should not be used. Other misconceptions exist in the minds of scientists as well as the general public. One authoritative source reports that 133 angiosarcoma cases have been discovered among employed populations; another reports the number as 54. Also it is not likely that "hundreds of thousands of workers" have been exposed to vinyl chloride when the word "exposed" is defined at a harmful level.

EEH proposes that the MCA fund a literature search and appraisal covering the past four years, to include both the scientific literature and the public and trade press. Further, EEH proposes that a paper be prepared for presentation to the Medichem meeting in September so that in some measure the record could be set straight. Such a paper would also present the opportunity to address the "crisis" approach to occupational and environmental health.

We believe such a presentation would benefit the chemical industry as well as industry and labor in general. We do not suggest an apology for past failures to control harmful exposures, but rather hope to place such risks in perspective.

Such a project would cost about \$6,500 and would require six weeks to complete. The Medichem meeting is scheduled for September 5 - 10, so the project would have to get under way by early July to assure timely completion.

If you feel that the MCA would be interested in such an undertaking, I will be happy to provide a detailed breakdown of estimated costs. In any event, kindly provide us with MCA's agreement for presentation of the Mortality Study results.

Sincerely,

Richard L. Davis

RLD:bw

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