

Memos to Members

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This special issue of Memos to Members is to draw your attention to some ramifications of OSHA's Informal Public Hearing on the Proposed Standard for Exposure to Beryllium during July-September 1977.

SEARCHES
Literature
Data

The proposed Standard states that occupational exposure to Beryllium should be regulated on the basis that Beryllium has been shown to be carcinogenic in humans. Three bodies of data were used by NIOSH to support this position, but the findings of these studies and the methods used in conducting them are seriously questioned by ten scientists who sent letters to the Secretary of Health, Education & Welfare, and the Secretary of Labor, on February 10, 1978.

SEMINARS
General
Special

These scientists are Drs. Merrill Eisenbud, Professor of Environmental Medicine, New York University Medical Center; Leonard Goldwater, Professor Emeritus of Occupational Medicine, Columbia University Faculty of Medicine; Ian Higgins, Professor of Epidemiology, School of Public Health, The University of Michigan; Brian MacMahon, Walcott Professor of Epidemiology, Harvard School of Public Health; Adrienne Rogers, Senior Research Scientist, Department of Nutrition and Food Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Daniel Roth, Statistical Consultant, Potomac, Md.; Irving Tabershaw, Professor Emeritus of Occupational Medicine, University of California, and Consultant in Occupational Medicine; and Howard Van Ordstrand, Head, Section on Environmental Health, Department of Pulmonary Disease, Cleveland Clinic Foundation.

COURSES
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They expressed concern "over the quality and credibility of that segment of government-sponsored health research performed by NIOSH and utilized by other government agencies, most notably by OSHA, for regulatory purposes." They feel strongly that "incompetent or biased studies which lead ultimately to confusion, controversy and erosion of credibility within the scientific community, do irreparable harm" . . . and they quote Senator Kennedy in the Congressional hearing on FDA preclinical testing:

RESEARCH
Bioeffects
Toxicology

NOTED:
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"Inaccurate science, sloppy science, fraudulent science—these are the greatest threats to the health and safety of the American people."

They are of the opinion that the Beryllium Standard happens to be one in which deficiencies of government-sponsored studies are very evident.

The scientists emphasize, however, that the question of the carcinogenicity of beryllium, though important, is not their fundamental issue. "The Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA has an obligation to issue standards based on scientifically sound data."

As an organization dedicated to the attainment of healthful working conditions through the application of sound scientific knowledge, IHF is in total agreement with this view. IHF believes that no matter which industry you represent, or what standards are applied to it, you have the right to an honest assessment of what protection is needed for the health of your workers. Also, that the workers have a right to an accurate analysis of the health hazards to which they may be exposed.

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