

- they rely too heavily on assumptions, e.g. similar distribution of fibre lengths in occupational and ambient air; similar respiratory volume; it is clear that a simple extension of the principles of sampling within factories to the general environment is inappropriate, both because of the very much lower concentrations in air and water, and the need to identify positively the type of mineral and size distribution of fibres;
- they compare an environmental quality standard for preventing malignancy with an occupational permissible limit for preventing asbestosis;
- in sampling air (and water) in the ambient environment the ratio of asbestos to other fibrous particles may be too low to permit neglecting the non-asbestos minerals, as is normally done in the factory and the mine.

Nevertheless they both indicate that ambient air exposure of the general public, except in case of para-occupational and neighbourhood exposure, is an order of two or three magnitudes smaller than in well controlled industry. It seems possible that a factor of 1000 or more may be large enough to reduce the risk of tumours to a negligible level compared to other risks.

The conclusion given before that it is not possible to come to a quantitative assessment of the risk of malignancies for the general public, is not contradicted by the two approaches mentioned.

In 1972 the Advisory Committee on Asbestos Cancers to the Director of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC 1973) discussed the following question: "Is there evidence of an increased risk of mesothelial cancers at low levels of exposure to asbestos, such as have been encountered by the general population in urban areas?" The answer was: "There is evidence of an association of mesothelial tumours with air pollution in the neighbourhood of crocidolite mines and of factories using mixtures of asbestos fibre types. The evidence relates to conditions many years ago. There is evidence of no excess risk of mesotheliomas from asbestos air pollution which has existed in the neighbourhood of chrysotile and amosite mines. There are reported differences between urban and rural areas, the causes of which have not been established. There is no evidence of a risk to the general public at present".

The data discussed in this report, not available at the time of the Lyon Conference in 1972, have not brought conclusive evidence that the conclusion of the Advisory Committee has to be changed. This report has stressed that

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