

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATIONS

Johnson & Johnson
New Brunswick, NJ
AF 13-081

March 15 and 16, 1976

Between: Dr. DeWitt R. Petterson
Vice President, Research
Johnson & Johnson

Dr. Robert M. Schaffner
Associate Director for Technology

Subject: Asbestos in Talc

On March 15, 1976, Dr. Petterson called and wanted to speak to Dr. Schmidt on the talc situation. On the morning of March 16, I called Dr. Petterson back and told him that it had not been possible for the Commissioner to talk to him on the 15th because of a Congressional hearing. I told him that, although it was up to him, I thought it would be unnecessary to do so now because I had brought the matter to the attention of Dr. Roberts and he had discussed the subject with Mr. Fine.

The Agency had decided not to issue a press release or talk paper because they felt sufficient information had already been given to the TV networks and the press through the live interview with Mr. Eiermann on Thursday, March 11, Channel 7, on the six o'clock news. Following that, Mr. Eiermann had answered telephone inquiries from several media people. Dr. Petterson thought that this was satisfactory.

Dr. Petterson indicated that he thought it was desirable for an exchange of the so-called Mt. Siani implicated samples between Mt. Siani School of Medicine and the Agency. I, in turn, discussed this with Mr. Eiermann and he said he had already mentioned the matter to Dr. Petterson when he was in the office on Thursday, March 11. So far, we have not received any samples from Dr. Langer (Mt. Siani) although arrangements have been made between the Mt. Siani people and our Cosmetic Technology Division laboratory personnel.


Robert M. Schaffner

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Schaffner
HFF-402

Honorable Norman F. Lent
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Lent:

JUN 25 1976

This is in further response to your May 13 inquiry on behalf of Mr. Davis Husing, Westbury, New York, regarding a recent article in the New York Times about asbestos in cosmetic talc products. The Division of Cosmetics Technology provided us with the following explanation concerning the statement, attributed to Mr. Eiermann, that electron-microscopic testing of talc was too expensive and time consuming for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to use.

The New York Times allegation did not reflect accurately the comment made by Mr. Eiermann, perhaps because the reporter did not fully understand the complexity of the issue. It was explained to the reporter that electron-microscopic testing of talc for asbestos is an excellent analytical tool for research purposes, however, that it would be too time consuming and expensive for use in routine control testing of talc in the production of cosmetic talcum powders. Furthermore, the majority of manufacturers do not have this instrument and would not be able to purchase it for economic reasons. Accordingly, the Agency has been investigating other analytical procedures for the determination of asbestos. These methods should permit quick and reliable detection of asbestos in talc and should be useful for effective analytical control testing by all manufacturers.

You may inform your constituent also that the FDA has been investigating many cosmetic talc products in recent years, and none were found to contain asbestos. The product samples mentioned in the New York Times article were manufactured prior to 1973 and do not reflect current production of cosmetic powder products.

We trust this information will be helpful to your constituent. If we can be of further assistance, please let us know.

Sincerely yours,

Robert C. Wetherell, Jr., Director
Office of Legislative Services

Enclosure
New York Times article

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H. J. Eiermann

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION
March 17, 1976

BETWEEN: Dr. Norman Estrin, Vice President for Research
The Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrance Association
Washington, D.C.

and

Heinz J. Eiermann, Director
Division of Cosmetics Technology
Food and Drug Administration

SUBJECT: Asbestos in Talc

Dr. Estrin called to inquire whether any new developments had occurred since the meeting with the CTFA Talc Subcommittee on March 15. I informed him that I had no knowledge of any new public occurrences.

He then wanted to know whether the FDA would exchange samples of talc with Dr. Langer, i.e., that Dr. Langer would provide us with samples of his 1973-collected commercial products in which he found asbestos and we would supply him with samples of the same brands which we had collected in 1975. I confirmed that this agreement had been made although samples had not yet been exchanged. When asked whether the same FDA samples could be made available to the CTFA Talc Subcommittee, I indicated that we would welcome any contribution by anyone on analytical expertise and hence would gladly make these samples available. He informed me that he would take this matter up with the Talc Subcommittee before requesting them from us.

He pointed out that I had quantitative analytical data on the asbestos contents of the samples investigated by Dr. Langer. He wanted to know whether I would make this information available to him. I informed him that I could make the letter from Dr. Langer containing this quantitative information available to him under FOI. At the same time the letter would then be placed on public display. He responded that he would think about it and let me know whether he wanted this information under these conditions.

Heinz J. Eiermann
Heinz J. Eiermann

P.S. Dr. Estrin called later in the afternoon and stated that he did not want the letter from Dr. Langer. He also requested that we supply him with the aforementioned samples and six samples
cc: were made available.

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