



8 FEB 1983

Joan M. Pankey
Supervisor, Cancer Information
Service
The John Hopkins Oncology Center
Cancer Communications Network Office
550 North Broadway
Baltimore, Maryland 21205

Dear Ms. Pankey:

This replies to your letter dated January 14, in which you request information regarding the potential relationship of talcum powder to lung and ovarian cancer as well as information we have on studies concerning the potential lung cancer hazard of inhaling asbestos contaminated talcum powder.

As you are probably aware, exposure to asbestos has been linked to cancer of the lungs. The matter of contamination of talc with fibrous asbestos was extensively study by both the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and industry in the mid to late 1970's. We have no knowledge of any cosmetic talcum powder product on the market that contains fibrous asbestos. Nor do we have any information or data which indicates that presently marketed cosmetic talc preparations are unsafe when used as directed.

While we are well aware that talc is chemically closely related to asbestos, talc needles are not known to cause harm or to present a hazard to health when talc containing baby powder and face powder are used under customary conditions of use or as directed on their labels.

With regard to your question to the relationship between talc and ovarian cancer, our scientists in our Division of Toxicology have reviewed their files and do not find any literature on this topic. A statement was found in a chapter in "Chemical Carcinogens", C.E. Searle, ACS Monograph 173, Washington, DC (1976) that mentioned ovarian tumors and asbestos. It stated "Prospective surveys of occupational groups exposed to asbestos have in general shown a small excess risk of some other types of cancers (in addition to bronchial and mesothelial), especially those of the gastrointestinal tract and ovarian tumors. The excess of these tumors is relatively small compared with that for "bronchial cancer". No reference was given for this statement, however.

The International Agency for Research on Cancer evaluated asbestos in 1976 (IARC Monograph - Vol. 14). No reference was made to any relationship between ovarian cancer and asbestos exposure in this report. A literature search on asbestos was performed by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1978 and you may wish to purchase a copy from the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, Virginia 22161, phone number (703) 487-4630; (order number PB-286-486 - Asbestos, a bibliography). You may also wish to run another literature search to identify more recent articles.

For your perusal, we are enclosing a number of documents which reviews the state of our knowledge relating to the health effects of talc and asbestos. These documents are as follows:

1. Letter dated 1/11/79 Kennedy/Wolfe
2. "Safety of Consumer Cosmetic Talc Products" Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health 2:1221-1222 1977.
3. "Mineralogical Characterization of Cosmetic Talc Products" Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health 2:1223-1226, 1977.
4. 21 CFR 73.1550 - Talc
5. Federal Register document of April 4, 1975 Part 8.

Many of the references cited in the above enclosures may provide you with additional useful information concerning talcum powder, asbestos, and cancer.

We hope that this information is helpful. If you have any further questions, please let us know.

Sincerely yours,



Allen R. Halper
Assistant to the Director
Division of Regulatory Guidance
Bureau of Foods

Enclosures;
as stated above

cc: HRC-1 r/f
HFR-3240 r/f

HFF-300 r/f
ARHalper:bdh:2/8/83:245-1505

HFF-314 r/f