ASBESTOS INFORMATION ASSOCIATION
NORTH AMERICA
1835 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006 • (202) 223-4885

bcc: Executive Committee
Hans Weill, M.D.

27 December 1976

COPY

Mr. Howard Cohn, Editor
MEDICAL WORLD NEWS
1221 Avenue of the Americas
New York, N. Y. 10020

Dear Sir:

The article, "Threat of Asbestos Disease Widens," in the October 18 issue of MEDICAL WORLD NEWS contains several statements that are misleading, highly speculative and not in accord with factual data. In the latter instance, for example, on page 45 in regard to world production of asbestos the statement is made that, "... now it is over 400 million tons..." The current figure for world production of asbestos is five million short tons according to latest statistics (1975) by the U.S. Bureau of Mines.

More importantly, however, are a number of statements in the article and conclusions to which the reader is drawn relating to asbestos-health issues which do not represent majority scientific opinion. These are reviewed in the order they appear in the article.

The comment atributed to Dr. Anderson of Mt. Sinai School of Medicine that one day's exposure to asbestos fibers is enough to produce pleural fibrosis is highly speculative. We know of no adequate data in scientific literature on which to base such a statement.

It is stated that "Studies from Britain and South Africa have found traceable asbestos exposure in the backgrounds of 85% to 97% of mesothelioma cases studied." These high percentages are either misquoted or exaggerated. The largest mesothelioma study from the United Kingdom (Greenberg and Lloyd Davies) clearly showed that one third of their mesothelioma cases had no definite occupational, family or residential exposure to asbestos.

The comment attributed to Dr. Nicholson that to study a single sample of asbestos requires a day's use of an electron microscope is questioned for fact and relevancy. The standard government approved procedure (U.S. Public Health Service/ National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health) for measuring airborne asbestos concentrations is the membrane