

February 6, 1957

Dr. John G. Chesney
Daughtry-Chesney Clinic for Thoracic Surgery
2615 Biscayne Boulevard
Miami 37, Florida

Dear Doctor Chesney:

I trust you will not believe me careless and discourteous in having delayed so long my response to your letter of December 28. I have had to neglect my correspondence lately because of other more immediate demands upon my time.

In the matter of the potential hazards associated with the inhalation of bits of fiber glass, I believe I can tell you what is known. The initial investigation of this problem was carried out by Leroy Gardner at the Saranac Laboratory, who apparently did not make any observations within industry. He did institute some animal experiments in order to find out what, if anything, in the way of a reaction of injury, occurred in the respiratory apparatus of animals following prolonged inhalation of an essentially pulverized preparation of fiber glass. His experiments gave essentially negative results, and he, at the time of his death, was convinced that no harmful effect was to be expected. Unfortunately his reports of his work were very sketchy, and much that he learned about this problem died with him. Some attempt was made later by a subsequent director of the Saranac Laboratory (Scheppers) to report on the pathological findings in Gardner's animals. In my opinion this was an abortive attempt, and I am not even troubling to give you the reference. If you want it, I can look it up, but there are several reasons why I believe it to be essentially meaningless.

Nothing else, I believe, has been done to explore this problem, experimentally. The workmen, however, have been under observation in the plant in which fiber glass is manufactured, and it appears that no injurious effect of consequence has been sustained by them. I am not prepared to assure you that this is strictly true. I merely have no information beyond what I have given you.

It seems very likely that we shall have some first hand information before long. An opportunity has presented itself to carry out an investigation of

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the conditions in a plant in which a group of men have been employed for some years. This will consist of the investigation of the environmental conditions and the examination of the men and of their records, including chest films, for some years back. It is for this reason that I know the background of this matter, - this, plus the fact that one of my associates, Dr. Frank Princi, has had much experience with the pulmonary diseases due to dust.

As I have indicated above, I believe that no disease process has come into being because of the manufacture and use of fiber glass. On theoretical grounds there is no good reason to believe there would be. However, since the facts can be established with reasonable certainty because of the years that have lapsed since this problem arose, it should be possible to establish the facts beyond any reasonable doubt. For this reason, it is best, I believe, to have an open mind in the matter.

Cordially yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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Dictated but not read.

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