

Asbestos Dust Labeled a Hazard To at Least One-Fourth of U.S.

By JANE E. BRODY

Asbestos dust, which has already been connected with the development of fatal cancer in one-half of asbestos workers, may be a potential health hazard for one-quarter of the population or more, it was reported yesterday.

This preliminary finding was described by Dr. Irving J. Selikoff in announcing the establishment of an environmental health laboratory at Mount Sinai Hospital. The laboratory will further investigate the danger to man of asbestos and other environmental contaminants.

Dr. Selikoff said the link between cancer and asbestos had led him to suspect that other mineral dusts that contaminate both urban and rural areas might create medical hazards for the public.

The new laboratory will be headed by Dr. Selikoff who, with Dr. Jacob Churg, found that asbestos workers eventually showed six to seven times the normal death rate from lung cancer and three times the normal death rate from cancer of the stomach, colon and rectum.

Other Workers Affected

Dr. Selikoff noted that the dangers of exposure to asbestos were not limited to those who work directly with this fibrous, insulating and filler material. The dangers, he said, extend to workers in "contiguous trades," such as other con-

struction workers and their families. According to the findings of three recent limited studies, the dangers might extend to the general population. The studies, which involved autopsies on 1,100 persons in three cities, showed that 25 per cent of the people had asbestos lodged in their lungs.

Dr. Selikoff explained that the studies had used a "crude technique" that disclosed only those asbestos fibers that had become coated by an iron-rich material while lodged in the lungs. A more refined technique now shows that many persons harbor non-coated asbestos fibers as well, he said.

New Study Started

Dr. Selikoff and his colleagues at the new laboratory have started a three-year study in which they will:

1. Examine, with the deceased's family's approval, the lung tissue of the from 3,000 to 4,000 persons expected to die in the next two years at Mount Sinai, Elmhurst Hospital and Veterans Hospital in the Bronx. The doctors will look for uncoated as well as coated asbestos fibers in the tissues.

2. Look for correlations between the causes of death and the presence of asbestos fibers in lung tissue.

3. Determine the occupational history of the deceased and their relatives and other pertinent background information.

Asbestos is a fibrous mineral highly valued for its noncorrosive and long-wearing properties. In addition to its common use as a fireproof material, Dr. Selikoff said, asbestos makes up about 60 per cent of asphalt tile and is used in dental cement, brake linings, plastics, beer filters, gas masks and paper. Until last year, some schools used asbestos dust instead of sand for children to play in.

MDs Study Effects of Asbestos Dust

By EDWARD EDELSON
Of the World-Telegram Staff

Doctors at Mount Sinai Hospital today set up a laboratory to find out whether the dust that has been killing workers in asbestos mines and plants is hurting the rest of us.

The hospital's environmental health laboratory will be headed by Dr. Irving J. Selikoff who, with Dr. Jacob Churg, has conducted investigations that revealed an alarmingly high incidence of lung and other cancers among asbestos workers.

The United States' Public Health Service and the city Health Research Council are giving grants totaling \$124,000 to support the laboratory, it was announced at a press conference in the hospital.

Studied Union Members

The Selikoff-Churg study was conducted among members of the Asbestos Workers Union in the New York area. It found abnormally high incidences of lung, stomach and intestinal cancer in the group.

Steps are being taken to reduce the workers' exposure to asbestos dust. But the doctors are increasingly concerned about the effect of asbestos dust on the population, at large. Asbestos is used widely in the construction of new buildings.

"Our asbestos workers who developed cancer had at least 20 years exposure," Selikoff said. "Any effect on cancer in the general population—and we don't know what it is—is the result of asbestos exposure from 20 to 40 years ago."

"Worldwide production of asbestos has increased from 50,000 tons a year 20 years

ago to 3.5 million tons annually now. We're not going to see the results of this until 1990."

Future Problem Seen

Selikoff pointed out that asbestos dust, once created, can never be destroyed.

"What we have now is not simply the production of 3.5 million tons a year, but the accumulation of some four decades of asbestos that has been mined," he said. "Our problem now is one for the future."

The Mount Sinai laboratory will also study the effects of other mineral dusts on humans. A mineralogist will be a member of the laboratory staff.

"We have been filling the air with a number of mineral dusts against which we have no natural defenses," Selikoff said. "Now we must determine the effects of these environmental hazards."

Among the questions to be settled, Selikoff said, is whether there is a critical level below which asbestos exposure is safe.

"We don't know whether a single small exposure has a carcinogenic (cancer-causing) effect," he said.

Will Continue Studies

The researchers will look for asbestos and other mineral dusts in the lungs of rural and city dwellers. Autopsies have shown traces of asbestos fibers in the lungs of one out of four urban residents.

The laboratory will also study the dissemination of asbestos dust in the air. Studies in Finland have shown that the dust can be detected up to 35 miles from asbestos mills.

8 96 ID.
DATED
MELBAINE DRIP

EXHIBIT

W/215

DETROIT PUBLIC LIBRARY
5201 Woodward Avenue
Detroit, MI 48202

AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF MICHIGAN :

ss.

COUNTY OF WAYNE :

Alice Downs being first
duly sworn, deposes and says that, he is
Librarian II of the
Detroit Public Library and that she has compared
the attached photoprint ~~perforated with the stamp~~
~~of the Detroit Public Library.~~ with the original
ASBESTOS. March 1930, Volume XI, Number 9.
Table of contents page, page 1, and pages 2 through
56.

(Describe document)

which is in the possession of the Detroit Public
Library and in my custody, and that said photoprint
is a true transcript therefrom and of the whole
thereof.

Alice Downs
Subscribed and sworn to before me this 15th day
of May A.D. 1990.

Barbara Anne Klont
Notary Public, Wayne County, Michigan
My commission expires _____

BARBARA ANNE KLONT
Notary Public, Wayne County, MI
My Commission Expires July 7, 1993