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Journal Article about Asbestosis



CONFIDENTIAL

Hospital, February 7, 1955.

C. H. Smith

Laboratory: Dr. W. W. Wether

The attached article has just appeared in the latest issue of the Canadian Medical Association Journal. Dr. Wether is considered one of the world's foremost authorities on asbestos. In my opinion it is unfortunate that his conclusions do not agree with our experience here in Canada.

Dr. Wether states that a few months' exposure to asbestos dust in grass will inevitably cause death. This definitely has not been our experience in the Canadian mining and milling operations.

Again he states that 215 of the 232 deaths from asbestos were complicated by tuberculosis. This has not been our experience and recent Canadian experiments have shown that there is no relationship between asbestos and tuberculosis.

Concerning the relationship between asbestos and lung cancer I have no comment. The two conditions are known to exist, but before we can draw any valid conclusions, we must have adequate experimental evidence combined with our operating experience.

I agree with Dr. Wether when he states that we must have international standards of diagnosis and control methods, but doubt if international agreement on such a scale could be achieved. This brings up a very important point. At the last International Congress on Industrial Medicine held in England it was noted that the European standards of diagnosis of asbestos have been lowered. They now do not require a typical x-ray pattern in addition to the history of exposure and physical findings as we do in this country. This probably is one reason why they are diagnosing more cases of asbestos than we do. Also I still believe that the asbestos fabricating processes are far more dangerous to health than are our mining and milling processes. The great discrepancy in the published figures and our experience lies in part I believe, in the difference of the two processes. I do not believe that any statistics of the milling processes have ever been published.

My recommendations are to repeat what I have on other occasions in the past. First, we should review all x-ray films in our files and correlate these findings with the working histories of the men. I believe that we would find the evidence conclusively in favour of Company interests, and if so, it should be published. Second, I feel that a study by some authority, such as the Bureau of Laboratory, should be started in order to find any possible relationship between asbestos and lung cancer.

WWS/hab

CC - E. V. Lindall
J. P. Hubbard

Lorrah E. Smith, M.D.