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ROBERT E. FARBER, M.D., M.P.H.
COMMISSIONER
JOHN B. DE HOFF, M.D., M.P.H.
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

AMERICAN BUILDING
BALTIMORE AND SOUTH STREETS
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21202
TEL. AREA CODE 301
752-2000

BALTIMORE CITY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

5 November 1971

Food & Drug Administration
Department of Health, Education & Welfare
600 Fisher's Lane
Rockville, Maryland 20852

Gentlemen:

I enclose copies of correspondence relative to an article in SCIENCE magazine for 17 September 1971 by R. R. Merliss, M.D., which suggested a possible relationship between talc coated rice sold to Japanese and the incidence of gastric carcinoma in Japanese natives.

You will note that I suggested that the presence of asbestos-form fibers in the talc which coated rice may represent a hazard if present in various body powders utilizing talc as a base. Dr. Merliss further notes that talc has been used as a filler in some medicinal tablets intended for oral useage.

May I ask that the Food & Drug Administration investigate the possibility of dangerous levels of asbestos existing in the various formulations of talc used in body powders or medicinal tablets.

Sincerely yours,

John B. De Hoff, M.D.
Deputy Commissioner of Health

JBD:mfr
Encs.