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NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
ASBESTOS CONFERENCE
JUNE 1978

(4) (10)

Assessment

The Generic Policy on the Regulation of Carcinogens is involving the full time efforts of OSHA and the Office of Toxic Substances. No action is expected on asbestos until resolution of the procedure in 1979. Pressure is now building by researchers, the U.A.W., and the Government to lower the 2 fiber/cc standard. High probability exists of a 1 fiber/cc standard. However, the new British approach consists of asbestos concentrations being reduced to the lowest attainable level under the 2 fiber/cc max. ceiling. Further regulation will encourage the use of substitutes. The possibility remains for a more stringent standard of .5 fiber/cc or lower. This would virtually eliminate asbestos usage. In the interim, the issue is attaining continued worldwide involvement and concern as evidenced from the publicity it received from the Meet the Press telecast Sunday June 25, 1978* and the large international representation at the conference.

Highlights of Presentations

Canadian (McGill Study)

- Withdrawl from exposure does not halt the progress of the carcinogenic condition.
- The longer and/or greater the exposure, the greater the number of deaths.
- Smoking influences the incidence of larnyx cancer under conditions of asbestos exposure.
- Carcinogenic conditions are most prevalent 20-30 years from first exposure.
- Each year cancer deaths are on the uprise from equal sample sizes of exposed populations.

German

- One fiber will not produce tumors.
- Asbestos fiber could act as an absorber of carcinogens. Knowledge is lacking on the initiation of cancer.
- The current U.S. standard allows for adequate control.
- Conditions have changed from the past and the issue should be updated in that perspective.

Asbestos was discussed by Mt. Sinai, J-M, and the U.A.W. Industry was not convincing enough to sway the debate from a pro-regulation stance.

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French

- TEM analysis utilized.
- Asbestos in building materials forbidden.
- Existent building materials containing asbestos controlled.

Gr. Britian (Statisticians)

- Deaths at higher levels of exposure have been extrapolated to levels expected at 2 fiber/cc. Significance based on - "What is the difference of exposure levels if cancer results."
- Studies have been extrapolated from [illegible] exposure levels in the past theorized to be 25 fibers/cc or higher.
- Studies lack an appropriate control group.
- Incidences of cancer are occurring in low risk groups - low exposure e.g. secretaries.

Turkey (Most unique paper)

First epidemiological documentation of mesothelioma from non-asbestos material.

- 150 cases of mesothelioma in villages with high zeolite concentration in the soil.
- Both men and women died at 40-50 years of age from [illegible] (latency 10 years earlier than industrial asbestos exposed population).
- No association of disease with cigarette smoking. Women are traditionally non-smokers.
- Dust levels have not been measured.
- Genetic factors and inbreeding not examined, but discounted.
- Fiber size ranged below 5μ.

U.S. Industry (J-M)

- A separate standard is required for the construction industry.
- There is a lack of accurate measurement of low airborne concentrations.
- Improvement in measuring capability does not mean the standard should be more stringent.
- The current standard of 2 fiber/cc is an effective and [illegible] standard for industry.

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U.S. Researchers (Mt. Sinai)

- Household contamination resulting in mesothelioma cases as a result of the proximity of shipyards and rock quarries.
- Clothing contamination can influence the development of a carcinogenic condition among family members.
- Non-smokers are subject to increased risk from exposure to asbestos.

U.S. Labor (U.A.W.)

- Regulation must eliminate asbestos exposure either through substitution or exposure to .01 fiber/cc or lower.

Recommendations

- Obtain reports on new British approach - 2 [illegible]/cc or [illegible] lowest attainable limit.
- Invite R-M, R & D Director Jim Trainor, to review [illegible] of asbestos elimination program.
- Invite J-M, Dr. Paul Kotin, to discuss OSHA Generic Policy to engineering co-ordinators.
- Obtain transcript of Meet the Press, June 25, 1978.

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