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Monsanto Fails to Find Key Cancers in Study Of PCB-Exposed Staff

By a WALL STREET JOURNAL *Staff Reporter*

ST. LOUIS—Monsanto Co. said it didn't find any cases of either malignant melanoma or pancreatic cancer among more than 300 current or former employes engaged in production of polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, at its manufacturing plant at Sauget, Ill.

Monsanto said it was releasing preliminary information from a continuing study in response to news media questions, prompted by a recent Mobil Corp. study. Mobil reported three cases of melanoma and two cases of pancreatic cancer among 72 employes exposed to a PCB product while working at a Mobil plant in New Jersey.

Dr. George Roush, director of Monsanto's medical and environmental health department, said that "the fact that we have found no cases of either of these cancers casts strong doubts that the findings of the Mobil study were, in fact, related to PCB."

He said the continuing epidemiological study will require another 12 to 18 months to complete and stressed that the information is "very preliminary."

"The incidence of lung cancer among deceased former employes who worked in the PCB unit . . . was higher than the rate for the general U.S. population," he added. "The findings to date may be significant, and they may well not be," he said. "What is needed now is a controlled study of the lung cancer cases."

Last January, Monsanto announced its intentions to cease all PCB production, consistent with the ability of transformer and capacitor manufacturers to convert to viable alternate dielectric fluids.

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