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RE: PLANTS, WILLIAM ELLSWORTH JR.
Our L00-276 and L99-568

Dear David:

I located the case that I was thinking of, although it was not exactly as I had recalled it. The case concerned a 65-year-old gentleman, William Ellsworth Plants, Jr. (our case #L00-276), who had an 86-pack year history of cigarette smoking and a history of having worked in the Calaveras Mines in Copperopoulous, California, initially for Jefferson Lake Sulfur Company, for Jefferson Lake Asbestos and for Pacific Asbestos which was stated to have become the Calaveras Mines. It is my understanding this was a mine in the same region the Union Carbide mine was located. Mr. Plant was employed at the mill and worked initially as a laboratory helper where his job was to crush rocks, take core samples and extract asbestos. He was stated to have performed this work prior to the opening of the mine. After the mine and plant were built, Mr. Plants became a laboratory technician, then a fiber grader and subsequently foreman and finally plant superintendent until the mine closed in 1974. When the mine reopened in 1976, Mr. Plants returned as a foreman and worked there until 1978. I initially reviewed surgical biopsies of a left pleural lesion and subsequently received autopsy material on Mr. Plants. I also received a copy of Dr. Barry R. Horn's report which gave a detailed description of how Mr. Plants was exposed to asbestos at the Calaveras Mines. The only other potential exposure Mr. Plants had was that he and his wife apparently bought and sold houses that they fixed up, which may have resulted in him being exposed to asbestos.

I also received a copy of a 15-page document sent to Mr. David Chambers, Department of Industrial Safety, San Francisco, California, from Gordon A. Coats, General Manager of Calaveras Asbestos, Ltd., dated January 13, 1976. I will hopefully be able to give you a copy of this document.

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I examined the autopsy tissue from Mr. Plants that was sent to me from Pathology Support Services in Sacramento, California. The asbestos digestion analysis we performed on the tissue showed what would generally be expected; that is, no asbestos bodies in 4 of the 5 lobes and five asbestos bodies per gram of wet lung tissue in one of the lobes, which was the limit of detection. This would not be surprising, given the fact that Mr. Plants was exposed only to chrysotile asbestos.

I sent samples of lung tissue to Dr. Ron Dodson on September 28, 2000 as a study case because it concerned Calidria asbestos in central California which was stated to be unique. As far as I know, this might be the first known case of mesothelioma reported in anyone who worked in the mining area who processed the mined Calidria chrysotile asbestos.

Give me a call if you would like to discuss this or if you need any other information. I do have a note here that I took photos of the case. There is wet tissue in our garage. One thing Dodson and I have been doing recently is looking at clearance of asbestos and finding that often lymph nodes are more important in evaluation of exposure to chrysotile asbestos than other places. There was interstitial fibrosis in Mr. Plants' lung tissue, but I did not identify asbestos bodies in the tissue, which would not be surprising, given the fact that this is chrysotile. Fortunately, he did have pleural plaque which would indicate previous exposure to asbestos.

The other thing we could do in this case would be to get the pleural plaque and digest that since there would be a very high likelihood that one would find asbestos in it, specifically chrysotile asbestos. I don't think there would be any way to determine if it was Calidria chrysotile vs. some other type of chrysotile, because as I have read, the people at Union Carbide do not make any claim that Calidria chrysotile is somehow different than any other type of chrysotile.

Sincerely,

Samuel P. Hammar, M.D.

SPH:nb

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