

Date: January 28, 1972
Reply to
Attn of: BF-1

Subject: Asbestos Activities in the Bureau of Foods per your memorandum of 1/20/72

To: John Jennings, M.D.
Associate Commissioner for Medical Affairs (CM-1)

A discussion session on Asbestos and Talc at FB 8 on August 3, 1971 was organized and chaired by Dr. Weissler. A summary and attendance list which was sent to you on August 5, 1971, and "Background briefing paper" are attached. It was generally agreed that most talcum powders of major manufacturers are relatively free of asbestos. There was no consensus that the normal use of good-quality talcum powders represents a health hazard. Even so, we have undertaken to collate and evaluate the various analytical procedures in use for the determination of asbestos in talc and other products, and to synthesize them into a package methodology which will give consistent, meaningful analytical results. Five of the six outside laboratories involved have already submitted their detailed procedures. The sixth has promised to submit its material very soon; they have been preparing a manuscript for publication on the same subject. As soon as we receive this, we can proceed to the evaluation and synthesis of the combined analytical procedure.

On a basis of the discussion held August 3, 1971, we issued a purchase order for the analysis of 100 samples of products containing talc, for the presence of asbestos at a sensitivity level of about 1% in the product. (some analyses have already been done). The analyses will be performed by Prof. S. Z. Lewin of New York University, primarily by the X-ray diffraction technique with backup by optical microscopy as needed. The cost is \$24 per sample. Results should start to come in within a few weeks.

Dr. Albert C. Kolbye, Jr. engaged in discussions on talc-coated rice at the National Canners Association in Miami earlier this month. He arranged to have Dr. Chiriboga of the University of Puerto Rico send him approximately five samples of rice so that we can determine the content of talc and of asbestiform particles.

Dr. H. F. Kraybill, Assistant Director for Scientific Coordination, has been in continuing communication with Dr. W. Clark Cooper, Professor of Occupational Health at the University of California School of Public Health, on the general question of the relation between chronic ingestion of talc or other silicates and the possibility of inducing gastrointestinal carcinoma or cancer at other sites. Dr. Cooper is studying the effects of repeated washings on the rate of removal of talc particles from coated rice.

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It is anticipated that Dr. Cooper will be able to meet with BF technical personnel soon and discuss his work.

In the office of Mr. Alan T. Spiher, the GRAS Review Officer, a draft is in preparation for a proposed provisional regulation for the use of talc, which would not allow asbestiform particles in talc used in foods. Also, a memorandum of need is being developed for contract feeding studies on silicates, including talc.

Virgil O. Wodicka, Ph.D.
Director, Bureau of Foods (BF-1)

Attachments

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