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Dear Benzene Research Interested Stakeholder,

On June 12 of this year representatives of invited companies met to consider participation in a consortium to fund epidemiological research on benzene in Shanghai, China. You were sent an invitation and background materials for the meeting but were unable to attend. At that meeting an overview of the scientific protocol for the studies was presented and there appeared to be agreement that the proposed research was valuable and that the scientific approach was appropriate. At the conclusion of that meeting, the company representatives present agreed to determine if their companies were willing to support the program in principle and to commit to proceed to the next step of working out terms of membership and how to address issues related to the bioethics of conducting this type of research.

This second meeting of potential members of the consortium has been scheduled for August 31, 2000 starting at 9:00 AM at the American Petroleum Institute headquarters in Washington, D.C. At this time we have received expressions of interest in proceeding to this next step from most of the companies present at our June 12 meeting at which the proposed research program was presented. I hope that you or another representative from your company will be able to attend the upcoming meeting.

The purpose of the August 31 meeting is to address a number of issues that have been identified as crucial to membership by a number of companies. These are the basis for cost sharing and the manner in which the ethical considerations of working with human volunteers would be addressed. In addition, plans to solicit membership from European benzene producers and a proposal for the infrastructure of the consortium will be presented for discussion and approval. The Benzene Task Force has retained an internationally known bioethicist, Dr. Baruch Brody of Baylor University College of Medicine (Houston, TX), to assist us in drafting a plan to identify and address the bioethics issues involved in our proposed research plan. The August 31 meeting date was chosen to allow Dr. Brody to be present at the meeting. Please consult with the appropriate individuals to determine what options for financial sharing are acceptable to your company (e.g., equal shares; membership levels based upon company size; etc.) and come prepared to discuss these. We intend that the next step forward on the path to consortium formation after this meeting will be for each company to determine a level of financial support to which it is willing to commit and to agree to terms of membership that will be drawn up based upon the agreements made at this meeting. It is imperative that we move forward with forming the consortium in order to demonstrate to our Chinese collaborators that we are committed to the research and to provide funding for protocol development and placing of the laboratory facilities in Shanghai.

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This meeting is critical to formation of the consortium and all interested companies need to be represented. If you cannot attend, please arrange for an alternate from your company. Due to the number of issues to be addressed the meeting will start at 9:00 AM and attendees should be prepared to stay until 3:00 PM. A follow-up mailing will be coming shortly with pre meeting attachments including a draft agenda, Dr. Brody's bio, a summary of the plan to address the bioethics considerations, and additional samples of cost sharing arrangements from other industry consortia.

Please RSVP to Paula Podhasky at API (podhaskyp@api.org, (202) 682-8333).

Sincerely,

Lorraine E. Twerdok

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