



MOUNT SINAI SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
of The City University of New York
FIFTH AVENUE AND 100TH STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10029



Department of Community Medicine

July 31, 1973

Mrs. Marie Ehrmann
Librarian-in-Charge
Research Center Library
United States Gypsum Company
1000 East Northwest Highway
Des Plaines, Illinois 60018

Dear Mrs. Ehrmann:

There is a vast literature reporting results of investigations into the comparative toxicity of chrysotile asbestos, in relation to other fibers. In summary, no significant difference was found; all varieties show important fibrogenic and carcinogenic activity. At your request, we will provide some of the most pertinent references.

Insofar as human effects are concerned, it is conceivable that the animal models do not reflect a difference which might exist among the fiber varieties; this possible difference is the subject of investigation in a number of ways. Dr. McDonald considers that his studies in the chrysotile mines in Quebec have shown less lung cancer and mesothelioma than other asbestos-exposed groups. Very worrisome is his observation that more heavily exposed chrysotile miners had five times as much lung cancer as those more lightly exposed(1). This would provide clear evidence of the carcinogenic effect of chrysotile asbestos, since the individuals concerned had been exposed only to this fiber variety. Too, review of x-rays among these men has shown numerous cases of asbestosis, demonstrating the fibrogenic effect.

In addition to mine and mill employees, studies have also been undertaken of factory populations thought to be exposed only to chrysotile. This is more complicated, since it is difficult to be absolutely sure that the populations concerned never had any exposure, however small, to other fiber varieties. One such study was reported by Dr. Thomas Mancuso in 1962, and an important cancer risk of the population investigated was found(2). Another study has been reported at scientific meetings by Dr. Joseph K. Wagoner of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. While this has not yet appeared in the scientific press, I am sure that you will be able to obtain a copy of the manuscript from Dr. Wagoner.

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