

Monsanto

FROM (NAME & LOCATION)

Medical, A2SC

DATE

March 13, 1974

cc:

J. Ellsworth - 1870
W. Easley - 1920
C. Eby - 1920
H. Corbett - E3SH
G. W. Ingle - 1920

SUBJECT

MCA "Meat Wrappers Asthma"
(Polyvinyl Chloride)

REFERENCE

TO

George Roush, Jr., MD
A2SA

Minutes

A subcommittee of the MCA "Technical Task Group on Vinyl Chloride Research" met March 6th to outline a program to evaluate the effects of exposure to the thermal decomposition products of polyvinyl chloride films. This meeting was scheduled as a result of the March 1st meeting reported on by G. W. Ingle (GWI to EPW, 3/1/74).

The scope and mission of the project was stated to be "To determine if adverse health effects result from exposure to polyvinyl chloride film decomposition products produced when hot wire cutting or thermal sealing the film".

Philip Witorsch, M.D., Chairman, Pulmonary Disease Department, George Washington University, was present as a consultant to Borden Company. He expressed the following views:

- 1) He doubts the actual existence of a specific "meat wrappers asthma" that can be related to any specific factor.
- 2) He believes that people who wrap meat have a high degree of respiratory disease.
- 3) He recommended that epidemiology studies be conducted to define the incidence and degree of respiratory disease among meat wrappers. He suggested both industry-related and randomly-employed controls be used.
- 4) He recommended that the study be conducted on a contract basis with University-based faculty. He suggested:
 - a) Dr. S. Katz - Georgetown University
 - b) Dr. K. Moser - U. of Calif., San Diego
 - c) Dr. W. Ball - Johns Hopkins U. Med. School
- 5) He strongly recommended that the senior investigator be a pulmonary physiologist rather than an epidemiologist.

In other discussions, participated in by representatives from

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Borden, Ethyl, Filmco, Goodyear, Reynolds Metal, and Tenneco, it became apparent that the exposure to the thermal decomposition products in meat wrapping rooms and produce wrapping areas is very obvious. Mention was made of haze in the produce wrapping "lofts". It was also pointed out that the Meat Cutters Union representatives are chronic complainers and that total elimination of the visible decomposition products would not end their complaints. Furthermore, it is probable that the production of decomposition products may be as great during heat sealing as during cutting.

Two working groups were established. One coordinated by T. M. Finnegan, Filmco, to assemble a list of potential investigators to conduct the epidemiology study. The second, coordinated by Al Cummings, Borden, to review the available literature on the thermal decomposition products of PVC film.

It was estimated that the cost of the program would be \$100,000 to \$150,000 and that it would be funded by share contributions of \$15,000 to \$20,000 per company.

Discussion

The stated objective was to broadly study all major employee groups exposed to PVC film decomposition products. However, when I suggested that screening tests be included in the epidemiology study to detect effects other than respiratory disease, I received very little support. I recommended that if Monsanto supports this project that we insist that the protocol be adequate to determine the presence or absence of systemic effects such as liver or renal involvement.

It is not obvious to me that a specialist in pulmonary function is the best choice to conduct the epidemiology study. If more qualified groups are available, they should be suggested to the committee within the next two weeks.

Future

- 1) A meeting of selected PVC film manufacturers and representatives from the Meat Cutters Union will be held March 13, 1974. Monsanto was not invited.
- 2) The next meeting of this MCA PVC Task Group Steering

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Committee will be held March 27, 1974. A list of potential locations and investigators for the epidemiology study will be reviewed. The thermal decomposition product literature will be reviewed and future analytical and toxicological programs outlined.

3) A symposia relative to VCM pathology will be held May 10, 1974 in New York under the auspices of NCI and NAS. The industry contact is Dr. Bernehl of Union Carbide.



Paul L. Wright

/bkr