



THE MOUNT SINAI MEDICAL CENTER

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January 18, 1989



Dr. Herbert K. Abrams
3364 E. Arroyo Chico
Tucson, AZ 85716

Dear Herb:

The hazards of asbestos exposure among workers have been known from the turn of the century, and scientists have been well aware of this. Physicians generally had clear access to this knowledge at least since 1924 when W.E. Cooke published a fatal case in the British Medical Journal (more extensively recorded in the same journal, in 1927). In the United States our knowledge goes back to Pancoast, Landis and Miller, who described abnormal x-rays with asbestos exposure in the American Journal of Roentgenology, in 1918.

A great deal more of information accumulated during the 1930's and 1940's and 1950's, including the risk of lung cancer, first detailed in the classic paper of Lynch and Smith in the American Journal of Cancer, in 1935.

My own studies began at Mount Sinai in 1954 and were briefly published in Clinical Research in 1960 and, more fully, in the American Journal of Medicine in 1961 with Drs. M. Bader and R. Bader.

In the 1960's, my colleague E. Cuyler Hammond, and I considered that it would be well to add additional quantitative data to the large body of knowledge that existed, utilizing the new epidemiological techniques that had much of their origin in the smoking studies then under way. (It is of interest that the first occupational cohort investigation was reported only in 1954, by Case. A useful and informative approach to this had been published in 1955 by Richard Doll, although the population available was selected.)

We adopted the technique of inviting the entire membership of the New York - New Jersey metropolitan area locals of the International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Asbestos Workers on January 1, 1963 for clinical study. In the event, 90% participated (1117 of 1249). Too, we initiated a prospective epidemiological mortality study of the entire membership of these union locals as of January 1, 1943, following the entire group to December 31, 1962.

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The findings were reported in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 1964.

It was thus not a question of attempting to discover whether asbestos exposure constituted a serious health hazard but rather to provide additional quantitative information concerning this risk.

We continued with this prospective from the 1960's on, and still do today.

With all best wishes.

Sincerely yours,


Irving J. Selikoff, M.D.
Professor Emeritus

IJS:cl

cc: Mr. Ronald L. Motley ✓

THE SARANAC LABORATORY FOR THE STUDY OF TUBERCULOSIS
OF
THE EDWARD L. TRUDEAU FOUNDATION

POST OFFICE BOX 111
7 CHURCH STREET
SARANAC LAKE, N.Y.

April 25, 1935

Dr. Anthony J. Lanza
Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.
New York City

Dear Tony:

I recently had a letter from Hurlbut, from the Harvard Department of Geology, saying that he had analysed the "Kings Platts Asbestos" which we used in our experimental work. He reports that there was only some 5% of fibrous asbestos in the material, the rest of it was serpentine and talc with a few impurities. I had this analysis checked by Dr. Gabriel, of the New Brunswick station, and he confirms the findings.

The question now arises as to whether we were at all justified in talking about pulmonary asbestosis - probably we really produced a reaction to serpentine. If we can find some real fibrous asbestos, ground sufficiently fine, we should repeat our experiment. However, this report may be of significance in explaining the lack of pulmonary disease among the Thetford workers. Most of the fibrous material which is discovered at the mine is hand picked, as you will recall. These processes would not be attended by the formation of appreciable amounts of dust. When this fibrous mineral is brought to this country for fabrication, the fibres may be broken up sufficiently fine to be inhaled. These petrographers are very disturbing people, but they have their uses.

Fletcher, I suppose, told you that he was going to send me a check from the St. Joe Lead for a \$1000. It was indeed most acceptable. He reported that Mr. Atwell was not inclined to see the light. I appreciate what you and he attempted to do with him nevertheless.

We are having a pretty good registration for the school and expect you will have no empty chairs to talk to.

Best regards,

Sincerely yours,

Roy
Leroy U. Gardner, M.D.
Director

