DISCUSSION (CONT'D.)

Mesotheliomas are diffuse and spread rapidly throughout the cavity of origin. They have yet to be successfully cured by any types of treatment including chemotherapy, radiation, or surgery. Death usually results within a year of diagnosis. In the general population, mesothelioma is so rare that it has yet to be separately coded in the international classification of diseases. It may account for one death in several thousand in the absence of an environmental or occupational asbestos exposure. In some groups of asbestos workers, it may account for one death in ten.

Once established, the other asbestos associated cancers differ little from those occurring in the general population, although there may be variations in the location of the primary site. Appropriate treatment and prognosis follow for the particular tumor. There is very limited long-term survival from lung cancer therapy; and only somewhat better from treated cancer of the colon or rectum.

Asbestosis and asbestos cancer - whether it be lung cancer, pleural mesothelioma, peritoneal mesothelioma, cancer of the stomach, colon, rectum - usually do not become clinically evident until more than 20 years have passed from onset of exposure. This time-frame is now widely recognized. While some such cancers may appear during the second decade following onset of occupational exposure, peak incidence is often not noted until the 30-years-from-onset point, or later. This is true both with regular, long-term asbestos work, and following short-term, brief or intermittent exposures. While variations in the time of occurrence may depend upon intensity and duration of exposure, with heavier exposure often being associated with shorter latency periods, variations among individual cases make it impossible to predict the latency period for the risk of any particular worker.

(Ref.: proposed asbestos standard (OSHA) Federal Register, Vol. 40, p. 47652, October 9, 1975.)

C. Applicable Standards of Exposure

The American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) in their 1976 TLV listing suggest that five fibers/cc > 5 μ in length be observed as an average exposure during an eight-hour

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