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Mt. Sinai Is Named A Research Center For Asbestos Study

By JANE E. BRODY

The Mount Sinai School of Medicine here was named yesterday as the site of the nation's seventh environmental health sciences research center.

Established under a five-year Federal grant of \$2.9-million, the new facility will focus its research on the health effects of asbestos. The work will be under the direction of Dr. Irving J. Selikoff, whose studies over the last two decades have identified asbestos as an important cause of lung disease and cancer among workers who are occupationally exposed to the fibrous mineral.

More recently, Dr. Selikoff has begun to look at the health risks to ordinary persons who experience prolonged, perhaps lifelong, exposure to comparatively low levels of asbestos in the air. The air of large urban areas is heavily contaminated with asbestos particles, and the lungs of nearly all people who live in such areas have been found to contain these particles.

Asbestos is widely used to fireproof buildings, to line air-conditioning ducts and as brake linings, among other things. Once asbestos particles lodge in lung tissue, they seem to remain there.

In the last two years, Dr. Selikoff, who is professor of community medicine at Mount Sinai, called attention to the likelihood that asbestos-related diseases may develop three or more decades after exposure to the substance.

The announcement of the Federal grant from the National Institute of Environmental Sciences was made at a news conference here by Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare.