September 12, 1978

To: G.E. Parker

From: Paul Kotin, M.D.

Re: ASBESTOS AND CIGARETTE SMOKING, AND SUSCEPTIBILITY TO LUNG CANCER

I understand your concern over that part of the presentation to employees that makes the point that cigarette smoking converts a nonhazardous level of exposure to asbestos into a hazardous one. I have told you that at every presentation so far the question was asked as to why we were implementing a smoking elimination program if in fact the 2f/cc level is acceptable. Our response to such a question must be that it is a non-hazardous level but combined with cigarette smoking it can be hazardous.

I realize that this might be interpreted as saying that there is no safe level of exposure to asbestos in the presence of cigarette smoking and that such a misinterpretation can have negative implications from the viewpoint of customer purchase and use of asbestos products as well as from the viewpoint of a legal position.

The position of J-M is and always has been that the potential adverse effects of asbestos exposure are dose-dependent, as with all other agents, and that there is clear evidence of a no-adverse effect level. Clinical data and epidemiological studies support the concept of cigarette smoking converting a nonhazardous exposure to a hazardous level by virtue of the fact that lung cancer is almost exclusively limited to cigarette-smoking workers, whereas other workers with similar exposure who do not smoke do not show this disease manifestation. It is important to realize that dose response applies not only to individual agents but also to combinations of agents, including cocarcinogens and predisposing other factors. To assume that any asbestos exposure in the presence of cigarette smoking is hazardous contradicts the fundamental pharmacological principles of dose response and no-effect level.

A second fact worthy of comment is that currently virtually all asbestos production is committed to products in which asbestos is locked into the product, so that users of asbestos products in which the asbestos is bound in face a totally different situation from that in the manufacturing of the product. Customers of raw fiber do indeed face many of the problems we have in our plants and they would be well advised to institute smoking elimination programs similar to our own.

Since the area is a complex one, it is difficult to simplify for employee presentations, but misunderstandings can be clarified with further explanations. I believe we are making a responsible management decision in terms of our no-smoking program and that our presentations should not be changed.

00000014

EWP

Published by AsbestosClaims.Law
asbestosclaims.law/library/11337/1