COPY

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

May 8, 1946

Mr. J. P. Woodard
Johns-Manville Corp.
New York, N. Y.

Dear Page:

I was pleased to see the copy of Dr. Heuper's paper on Cancer in its relation to occupation and environment and, as requested, I am returning it herewith.

It is well known that asbestosis has been mentioned as one of the causes of pulmonary cancer because of the fact that there are now on record some twenty-three cases of coincidence of the two conditions. I am not at all sure that selection has not played a large part in these publications. Everybody is looking for a cause of cancer, and whenever even a suspicious occupational history is obtained, the doctor is likely to publish his case with suggestions that some dust or fume has been the cause. However, the number in the case of asbestosis is sufficiently great to be impressive. I, myself, have felt that this notion is erroneous, since examination of films of persons employed in the asbestos industry has, to my knowledge, not shown any excess of carcinoma of the lung. Dr. Vestal concurs in this idea; nevertheless, the notion prevails in medical circles.

It is to collect and publish more reliable information on this and other little appreciated phases of the asbestos problem that I hope we may have the opportunity to review all films of Johns-Manville employees. Somebody should do this for the asbestos industry in the United States. I believe that 'somebody' should be outside of the industry, as obviously it would then carry more weight. I hope, before I die, the opportunity may be afforded us.

There is one other phase of the subject, however, that I believe deserves consideration. In one of my reports to your group, I noted that there was an unusually high incidence of cancer of the lung in white mice which had been exposed to asbestos dust. This species of animal does not develop asbestosis, largely, I think, because of the air passages too small to permit inhaling of fibrous asbestos. Nevertheless, we did find over 80% of mice exposed to asbestos showing tumors of the lung, and only some 15% or 20% of those exposed to other dusts showed tumors of this nature. These findings represented a summary of all our experience with mice in asbestos dust. Experiments were not done with the purpose of demonstrating cancer. No attempt was made to control the observation. No care was taken to select a strain of mice that was or was not susceptible to tumor. Cancer has not developed in any other species of animal used in the experiment.

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In view of the publicity given cancer of the lung, I thought that the subject deserved further experimental investigation. I have made a proposal to the National Cancer Institute for a grant of $15,000 to carry on a three-year experiment.. I talked the matter over with Dr. Rhoads of the Memorial Hospital and he was highly enthusiastic. As a member of the appropriation committee of the National Cancer Institute, he made favorable recommendation. However, other members of the committee turned it down and the subject was dropped. I still believe that it might be a suitable matter for further investigation.

More important, however, would be the analysis of films of persons employed in the asbestos industry. If a large enough number of such films were revieved by one central agency, I am quite sure that we would have evidence to controvert the implications of the case reports now in the medical literature.

I enclose a reprint by two of my associates dealing with the general subject of pulmonary cancer and inhaled dust. In the bibliography I have checked several articles reporting cases in asbestos workers.

Sincerely,

s/ Roy
Leroy U. Gardner
Director

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