CANCER PREVENTION COMMITTEE

477 First Avenue • New York 16, N. Y.

June 16, 1950

Dr. R. A. H. Case
The Chester Beatty Research Institute
The Royal Cancer Hospital
London S. W. 3, England

Dear Roberts

We recently had a visit from representatives of the asbestos industry interested in the question of asbestosis in relation to lung cancer. As you know, the strongest evidence for this is the data on pp. 79-81 of the Annual Report of the Chief Inspector of Factories for 1947, listing 31 cases in which the two diseases were said to coexist.

It is my understanding that this report is based on death certificates from various sources, and that some men make a diagnosis of asbestosis on the basis of minimal microscopic changes whereas others feel the diagnosis should not be made unless gross changes are apparent. The extent of the asbestosis, its anatomical relation to any cancers, the histological demonstration of cancer and the type of cancer are matters of general theoretical interest as well as of practical importance to the industry.

I should imagine that gross material from a good number of the cases must be in formalin somewhere in England. Would you care to take up with Dr. Harvey Gruer the question of assembling large slices from as many of these lungs as possible? Such a collection could be circulated to a number of pathologists to make their own blocks for histological study. It should provide more extensive demonstrations than could easily be presented in photographs by anyone writing [redacted].

Pathologists being the disagreeable fellows they are, this scheme might obviate years of haggling. I believe this Committee could arrange the financing of the endeavor, transmit the material and assemble statements on it from pathologists mutually acceptable to the present owners of the lungs and to the medical officers of asbestos companies on this side of the water. If desired, these statements might be appended to any report on the material by its original discoverers, or withheld until after their publication.

You can appreciate that serious problems in insurance and compensation are involved. I assume that Dr. Harvey Gruer is the proper person to approach, and should welcome an opportunity to meet with him on my forthcoming visit to London. July 7 and July 12 are the days still open on my schedule.

Sincerely,

William E. Smith, M.D.

WESmt

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A Committee devoted to the study of environmental factors in cancer.

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