



Attempts to Measure Differential Cancer Risks for Different Asbestos Fibers Come up Short

Developments in Asbestos Cancer Risk Assessment

Michael Silverstein, Laura Welch and Richard Lemen. American Journal of Industrial Medicine, November 2009.

Overview

Asbestos, in its various forms, is perhaps the most thoroughly researched and best characterized occupational and environmental health hazard. Efforts have been made for 25 years to develop asbestos risk assessments that provide valid information about workplace and community cancer risks. Mathematical models have been applied to a group of workplace epidemiology studies to describe the relationships between exposure and risk.

Key Findings

- None of the efforts to use statistical models to characterize relative cancer potencies for asbestos fiber types and sizes have been able to overcome limitations of the exposure data, and should not be used to drive occupational and environmental health policy.
- New methods and more precise and reliable exposure assessments may enable such research in the future, but the uncertainties inherent in current models are too great to justify continuing industrial use of asbestos in any of its forms.
- The EPA, which tested a method of exposure testing based on these mathematical models, has now rejected and discontinued these efforts.
- Banning the production and use of the six regulated forms of asbestos and other asbestiform fibers should be a more pressing public health priority than fiber-specific asbestos risk assessments.

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See abstract:

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