Recent Results from Research on Asbestos in Albania

ROMEO HANXHARI, PhD
Professor and Lecturer
Department of Geography, University of Tirana, Albania

President, Association for New Environmental Policies of Albania
Landmark Eternit decision in Turin, Italy 2012
The amount of asbestos used in Albania between 1930-1990 is estimated at approximately 188,000 tons.
Asbestos containing products mostly used or produced in Albania

- The most widespread asbestos containing product in Albania is the **asbestos-cement** containing 10-25% asbestos. In the ‘60s a factory for asbestos-cement was built and operated 1992.

- The material may be compressed into flat or undulated sheets to build roofs or walls, and can produce a range of other products such as pipes, drains, guttering, conduits, tanks, etc.

- Other products still in use in Albania include **industrial items**, such as textiles for anti-creepers fire extinguisher or metallurgy workers, asbestos blanket for extinguishing oil fires, ropes, rubber, etc.
Examples of asbestos used in Albania
Examples of asbestos used in Albania
Examples of asbestos used in Albania
Examples of asbestos used in Albania
Tekstil industrial
Kampion i marrë në pajisje shtëpiake të dyshuara për përmbytje Amianti
(kampionimi dhe foto: Prof. As. Dr. Romeo Hanxhari, analiza mikroskopike nga prof. Dr. Agim Sinojmeri)
Asbestos sample taken from inside of the ship
Microscopic analysis from Dr. Hanxhar and Dr. Sinojmeri
The Total Quantity of Asbestos Ever Used in Albania

- We sought to identify the regions of higher health risk.

- We defined 4 levels based on the quantities of asbestos used during the observation period 1930-1990.

- The total quantity during the observation period was 188,000 tons.

- High risk areas include workers exposed to asbestos and its related products during construction or operation, as well as local residents who may be exposed to the release of asbestos fibers.
Prevalence of Asbestos in Albania: Current Picture

Today in Albania the actual quantity of Asbestos is around 90,000 tons.

- This map gives a territorial analysis showing areas where asbestos is still present in various forms, friable or non-friable.

- This map shows asbestos hot spots, and potential areas where residents are currently exposed to high risk.

- These are the areas where we need to focus more preventive interventions through information and screening to avoid the risk of cancer morbidity, but also the interventions of recovery and remediation sites with Asbestos.
Samples analyzed by our team

Field methodology

We identify:
• Type of material
• Localization
• Number of sites of the sample
• Accessibility
• Condition of the surface
• Level of degradation

We have shown:
• We can visually identify through inspection, sample and conduct lab analysis
• We can identify from samples percentage of asbestos by either lab analysis or average estimation
Estimating Asbestos Related Disease in Albania

- We have attempted to estimate the asbestos disease burden in Albania.

- Diagnosis is done only for lung diseases treated in the hospital “Sanatorium”.

- The only question asked of lung cancer patients is: Do you (or have you ever) smoked? The result is that 98% of patients are smokers.

- This does not distinguish other lung cancer causes.

- We have determined there are approximately 60 new cases of mesothelioma/year based on hospital diagnostic data.

- These are likely to be underreported and may be twice this estimate.
Model for a Surveillance System

- We have designed a exposure history questionnaire for patients with symptoms relevant to a history of asbestos exposure

- We are attempting to implement use of the questionnaire by primary care physicians and integrate into a central method of reporting
• romeo.hanxhari@gmail.com