



VN-BAN



Media Release

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ALERT: Asbestos Public Health Hazard

Asbestos victims' groups and campaigning bodies from Latin America, Asia and Europe have today published multilingual resources to raise awareness of the public health hazard in the world's biggest asbestos producing countries.

The Brazilian Association of the Asbestos-Exposed (ABREA), The Eco-Accord Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (Russia), the Vietnam Ban Asbestos Network and the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS/UK) joined forces to produce translations into Portuguese, Russian, Chinese and Vietnamese of a new text which confirms the additional disease risk to people who did not work in the asbestos industry.¹

Having cited numerous studies which documented elevated incidences of asbestos-related disease from non-occupational exposures, the author of this commentary – Professor Leslie Stayner – highlighted the proven health hazard of low level asbestos exposures and the impact of cumulative exposures from multiple sources such as contamination at home and in the environment; given the ubiquity of their use, it was not surprising that asbestos-cement roofing and pavements containing asbestos tailings were specifically mentioned in the discussion of the “strong evidence” of an association between pleural mesothelioma and the exposure to asbestos material.²

Commenting on the importance of this text, Olga Speranskaya from Russia's Eco-Accord Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development, said:

“Stayner's conclusion that the populations of towns where asbestos is mined and/or processed will ‘most likely bear the costs in terms of health and for the cleanup of their homes and environments,’ certainly rings true with what we have discovered in Russia. Our research has documented a colossal lack of public, professional and medical awareness of the asbestos health hazard, high concentrations of asbestos in ambient air near processing facilities and the dumping of toxic waste into local ponds and onto public highways.”

Considering the substance of this article within the context of her own country's experience, Retired Brazilian Labor Inspector Fernanda Giannasi said:

“Professor Stayner's assertion that chrysotile (white) asbestos can, like other types of asbestos, cause lung, laryngeal and ovarian cancer as well as mesothelioma (cancer) and other diseases is of utmost importance in Brazil. Despite huge public and political support

¹ Russia, China and Brazil account for 90+% of global asbestos production every year. Vietnam is one of Asia's biggest asbestos consumers and is regarded as a strategic asbestos market by global producers. The Vietnam Ban Asbestos Network (VN-BAN) is at the forefront of the Vietnam ban asbestos campaign.

² Stayner L. *Para-occupational exposures to asbestos: lessons learned from Casale Monferrato, Italy*. November 9, 2015.

<http://oem.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/oemed-2015-103233?ijkey=anYWol7tqbxTU&keytype=ref&siteid=bmjjournals>

for a national asbestos ban, industry lobbyists and their well-paid government supporters allege there is no proof to substantiate the need for outlawing the commercial exploitation of a valuable natural resource. Stayner's conclusions and the evidence he cites prove otherwise. The Portuguese version of this commentary will prove an invaluable resource for our campaign to ban asbestos."

To undertake these translations and provide free online access to the full original text required the cooperation and permission of the author, the editor of the publishing journal and senior staff at the British Medical Journal. Their assistance and cooperation is gratefully acknowledged.

Notes to Editors

1. Asbestos, an acknowledged carcinogen, has created the world's most deadly epidemic of occupational disease. Exposure to asbestos can cause a variety of cancers and respiratory diseases, the worst of which are grossly debilitating and ultimately fatal.
2. The various versions of the Stayner text *Para-occupational exposures to asbestos: lessons learned from Casale Monferrato, Italy* can be accessed at the following links:

English:

<http://oem.bmj.com/content/early/2015/11/09/oemed-2015-103233.full?keytype=ref&siteid=bmjournals&ijkey=anYWol7tqbxTU>

Russian:

http://ibasecretariat.org/stayner_comm_russian_upl_dec_2015.pdf

Chinese:

http://ibasecretariat.org/stayner_comm_chinese_upl_dec_2015.pdf

Portuguese:

http://ibasecretariat.org/stayner_comm_portuguese_upl_dec_2015.pdf

Vietnamese:

http://ibasecretariat.org/stayner_comm_vietnamese_upl_dec_2015.pdf

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