SOCIAL MEDIA ADVOCACY TO COUNTERACT PROPAGANDA ON SAFE USE OF CHRYSOTILE ASBESTOS IN THAILAND

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ASBESTOS AND MESOTHELIOMA

Mesothelioma is rare and it is strongly associated with asbestos exposure. Thus this cancer can be used as "a signal tumor" for asbestos exposure/toxicity.
In Thailand, 90% of imported chrysotile asbestos is used in roof tile products, floor coverings and cement pipes. About 7% is used in brake and clutch linings and about 3% is used for other asbestos products.
Trend of Estimated Asbestos Consumption by Country

ANTICIPATED DEATH FROM MESOTHELIOMA IN UK
Amount of Imported Asbestos in Thailand during 1996 – 2012

Source: Thai Customs Department: Import & Export Statistics
WHO POSITION ON ASBESTOS

- All forms of asbestos, including chrysotile asbestos, are carcinogenic to humans.
- There is no safe threshold level of exposure to any type of asbestos.
- Exposure to asbestos can cause mesothelioma and cancer of the lung, larynx and ovary, asbestosis (fibrosis of the lungs), pleural plaques, thickening and effusions.
- Exposure to asbestos is difficult to control.
- The most effective way to eliminate asbestos-related diseases is to stop the use of all types of asbestos.
- WHO encourages the use of safer substitutes.
Office of Consumer Protection Board, Foundation for Consumer, and Health Consumer Protection Program Had MOU to work together on controlling asbestos related disease 25 November 2010
The National Health Commission, chaired by Prime Minister on 25 February 2011, issued a resolution on banning the import of all types of this mineral. Then, the Thai Government Cabinet approved this resolution in April 2011.
DECLARATION ON NO ASBESTOS SOCIETY
ESTABLISHMENT OF THAILAND BAN ASBESTOS NETWORK (T-BAN)
17 FEBRUARY 2011
Thailand Ban Asbestos (TBAN) Network, comprised of academics, consumers and workers, requested the immediate stopping of such propaganda. May, 10 2011
Letter from World Scientists to Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra
asked for asbestos ban (May 29, 2012)

Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra,
Thailand

Dear Prime Minister Shinawatra:

We attach a statement signed by scientists from around the world, condemning the actions of the Chrysotile Information Center of Thailand, who have threatened legal action against Prof. Vittaya Kulasatien, if he and the Consumer Protection Health Plan at Chulalongkorn University do not cease communicating the inevitable scientific evidence on the risk to health posed by chrysotile asbestos.

We wish to also draw to attention the fact that the information contained in the letter from the lawyers hired by the Chrysotile Information Center is scientifically erroneous.

It is totally incorrect, for example, to state that mesothelioma is not caused by exposure to asbestos, but is instead caused by smoking. As the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has stated: "Malignant tumours arising in the pleural or peritoneal linings (diffuse malignant mesothelioma) have no association with tobacco smoking and are characterized by a different spectrum of molecular alterations."

It is totally incorrect to state that England "still safely uses asbestos". England banned the use of chrysotile asbestos in 1999. The British government's Health and Safety Executive considers asbestos to be a continuing major health risk in England, which kills approximately 20 construction workers every week. For this reason, the government has launched a campaign to warn workers of the dangers: Asbestos the Hidden Killer.

It is extremely disturbing that workers in Thailand are being exposed to shockingly high levels of asbestos fibres, which place workers at great risk of harm. Tests conducted in eleven asbestos-processing industries in Thailand, reported in a paper by Chitritha Veeradejkriengkrai from the National Institute for the Improvement of Working Conditions and Environment, showed that "the airborne asbestos concentrations ranged from 0.01 to 43.31 fibers/ce (average of 5.45 fibers/ce). Of these measurements, 39

Asbestos Apologists

Russia's leading asbestos miner says Thais need to be educated: There's bad asbestos and then there's chrysotile

Asbestos has been banned in almost 40 countries on the grounds that the fibers when inhaled can cause lung cancer.

As a result, all amphibole asbestos mines have been closed.

Only chrysotile asbestos mining remains. But few people know that there are two types of asbestos. And few people know why one type of mine has been closed while others are permitted to stay open.

Some countries are preparing to impose a blanket ban on all asbestos without clear evidence demonstrating that chrysotile is harmful.

Orenburg Minerals, the second largest asbestos miner in Russia, said the campaign has nothing to do with public health. It is about economic war, the company argues.

Golm: Chrysotile is still widely used
Tell the truth about asbestos

With regard to the apparent attempt by the Thai government to dismiss or downplay the dangers of asbestos, there is not a health nor medical organization in the world that has not condemned the use of chrysotile (white) asbestos. My husband was exposed to it while serving with the Canadian navy and died a miserable mesothelioma death 20 years later. He is not the only one, there are thousands of Canadians who have not survived contact with white asbestos.

Our government has refused to ban this deadly mineral, despite the fact that asbestos mining in our country is bankrupt. I hope that Thais will make sure that their government takes the steps to protect its citizens that the Canadian government has not.

Michaela Keyserlingk
Ottawa, Canada
ASBESTOS STORY INACCURATE

- The article refers to the World Health Organization and the International Labor Organization with misleading and inaccurate information on at least two points, when it said: "The World Health Organization and the International Labor Organization have researched the issue and have a position on the subject _ chrysotile should be regulated, not banned.

- The EU was not convinced by the WHO research", and "Research by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a part of the WHO, has identified many hazardous substances, include alcohol, tobacco, salted fish and many substance we come across in our daily lives. It never mentions chrysotile."
ASBESTOS STORY INACCURATE

• I would like to correct these inaccuracies by sharing the following facts.
• Firstly, the WHO recommendation is "to stop the use of all types of asbestos". This is stated very clearly in the WHO fact sheet No.343 which includes the clause saying "the WHO, in collaboration with the International Labor Organization and with other intergovernmental organizations and civil society, works with countries towards elimination of asbestos-related diseases".
• Secondly, the EU has banned all use of asbestos and the extraction, manufacture and processing of asbestos products. This includes white asbestos (chrysotile asbestos).
• Thirdly, the IARC provides clear and abundant information on the serious health risks of asbestos, including chrysotile asbestos.
• I would suggest the readers consider these evidence-based conclusions and facts. These are based on collective review by the best experts in the world with access to available evidence and published by agencies which are driven by evidence and not industry interests.
• The controversial article appears to be an opportunity for industry to promote its own interests at the expense of factual information and misrepresents WHO/IARC and ILO.
MISLEADING ON SAFE USE OF CHRYSOTILE ASBESTOS

• One of the disputed cases concerned tee shirts with seriously incorrect information accompanied by the World Health Organization logo. On the front of the tee shirts produced by an asbestos-cement roof tile company, was the slogan (in Thai):
• “A toothpick is more dangerous than Asbestos.”
Another more recent case was the use of a radio broadcast to inform the public that: no one had died in Thailand from asbestos, asbestos is safe and that asbestos-containing products last longer than other products.
Spot content is

“PLEASE BE AWARE: DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THERE WERE PEOPLE WHO DIED FROM ASBESTOS IN THAILAND. THE MEDICAL EXPERTS CONFIRMED NO CASE WAS REPORTED... Please be aware that chrysotile roof tile products are very durable, cost-effective and safe. WE CONFIRM THAT IT IS VERY HARD, COST-EFFECTIVE, AND SAFE”
CONSUMER ADVOCACY NETWORK USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO REPORT THE MISCONDUCT OF SUCH COMPANY TO CONSUMER PROTECTION AUTHORITY

http://www.noasbestos.org/

Fan page คนไทยไม่เอาแร่ใยหิน
Ban-Asbestos Thai citizen group

Facebook: Noasbestos Hcprojectet
MCOT will cease the advertisement when receive the clear evidence on asbestos hazard ” Director of FM radio 100.5, 26 Dec 2012
The owner of chrysotile rooftop products, who accepted that he paid for the advertisement, insisted that the information is true and he wants people to have alternative from his product”, 27 Dec 2012

Spot content is “PLEASE BE AWARE: DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THERE WERE PEOPLE DIED FROM ASBESTOS IN THAILAND. THE MEDICAL EXPERT CONFIRMED NO CASE WAS REPORTED…”

FACT: TWO MORE CASES

Asbestos-Related Diseases in Thailand and Review: Literature

The co-authors of the paper detailed the death of:
- a 51-year old Thai male, who had worked at an asbestos-cement factory for 23 years, from mesothelioma, four months after being diagnosed;
- a 76-year old Thai male, who had been employed as a mechanic at the same asbestos-cement factory for 35 years, from asbestosis.

http://jmat.mat.or.th/index.php/jmat/article/view/2160
Additional spot content is

“Please be aware that chrysotile rooftile products is very hard, cost-effective, and safe. WE CONFIRM THAT IT IS VERY HARD, COST-EFFECIVE, AND SAFE”

**FACT** “The advantage of asbestos product is cheaper and hard but it easy to break down, after 5–10 years it begin to break down. The substitute material that was used is more flexible and more durable”

“Previously, we use floor sheet and smooth wall material from asbestos but at present almost all architects avoid to use it because it easy to break. We teach our student not to use.”

Mr Sakchai Young–Trakul
Vice President of Architect Council,
19 Dec 2012 at National Health Assembly.
“We should consider who gain the benefit, who lose, and the fact that happen in real world.”

Mr Pongtep Jaru-umpun, In charge of Industry Department, 27 Dec 2012

“Thai company, which is the largest producer of construction products using asbestos in Thailand, with five plants and over 1,000 employees.”

http://www.importgenius.com/importers/ulan-marketing-company-ltd
National Social and Economic Advisory Council (NESAC) requested MCOT to cease advertisement on asbestos propaganda.
Counter advertisement:
Asbestos is dangerous!!! It is everywhere around you. It can cause lung cancer, mesothelioma and various cancers according to international organizations like the WHO and others. More than 50 countries have banned asbestos. People in Thailand are suffering from and have died from asbestos-related diseases.
• **Mass Communication Organization of Thailand (MCOT):** T-BAN requested MCOT to cease advertisement on asbestos propaganda.

• **Office of Consumer Protection Board (OCPB) and the Office of National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC):** T-BAN requested OCPB and NBTC to order MCOT to stop propaganda advertisement and investigate the permission of such advertisement.

• **Media Council on Radio and Television (MCRT):** T-BAN requested MCRT to investigate professional practice of MCOT.
RESULTS

• Office of Consumer Protection Board informed the radio station about misconduct and the misleading advertisement; the advertisement was finally withdrawn.

• A case is ongoing to determine whether consumer protection law has been violated.
CONCLUSION

• Social media platforms have been successfully used by advocates for health consumer protection to counteract asbestos industry propaganda.
• Social media networks are important outlets for health consumer protection campaigns and their use should be considered when issues related to policy decisions regarding health consumer protection are under discussion.