



To Dr. Katleen Ruff

Hasselt, February 10, 2014

Dear Dr. Ruff,

I received your Request Letter, dated January 28, 2014, in good order along with an extract of 'Le Monde' in French and English version.

The allegation in your letter concerns a paper: Carlo La Vecchia (ITALY): "ROLE OF STOPPING EXPOSURE AND RECENT EXPOSURE TO ASBESTOS ON THE RISK OF MESOTHELIOMA" that was submitted on September 28, 2011, accepted on October 2, 2011 and published in May 2012. The responsible editor was myself. To me, the paper was clearly produced by two experts in the field, with sound scientific data (literature review type of paper) and with appropriate (meta-)analysis. Conflict of interest: none declared. Financial support: The work was conducted with the contribution of the Italian Association for Cancer Research (AIRC), project No. 10068. The conclusion of the paper was: *There is consistent evidence that for workers exposed at young age the risk of mesothelioma is not appreciably modified by subsequent exposures, and that stopping exposure does not materially modify the subsequent risk of mesothelioma.* This conclusion was in line with the literature at that time and members of EPC agreed. In the months after publication there was not a single remark or 'Letter to the Editor' to suggest any inconsistency, indicating that, pure scientifically, there was no problem at all. In particular, neither you nor the co-signers of your letter, made a notification of scientific flaw. Also, Dr. Dario Mirabelli, which you cite by name in your letter, has not challenged the content of the paper with us.

I was contacted on December 12, 2013 by Mr. Stéphane Foucart from the *Le Monde*. I replied early in January after my winter holiday. Mr. Stefano Foucart didn't reply so far but from your letter I understand that the article was published already on December 18, 2013 saying that "*Carlo La Vecchia et Jaak Janssens, les deux éditeurs de la revue, n'ont pas répondu aux sollicitations du Monde*". As you can understand, this is unfair. In particular, since no reaction in print or by phone was given to my answer.

Of course there is the issue of "conflict of interest" and you provided the policy of the Journal in your letter. We do take this statement very seriously. We rely on the authors to declare these, but if these are challenged, as in this case, we return to the authors for more information. We would also consider publishing a statement in a following issue to clarify for readers any omissions or corrections to those stated in the original publication. Dr La Vecchia asserts that the content of the paper is correct.

In your letter you question our mission in ECP: "*the goals of ECPO claim to pursue, namely that of preventing cancer and helping cancer victims and their families*". ECP does provide and collect scientific evidence to prevent cancer. However, we don't use the Society in helping cancer victims although most



of our members do this in the daily professional life. The evidence we provide is science and the resulting information that comes from this science.

The paper's content and conclusions have not been questioned in the 18 months following publication until now and I don't think there is any scientific reason to question the position of Dr. La Vecchia in the seat of ECP, in the Editorial Staff of the Eur J of Cancer Prev and in the International Advisory Committee. We also distance ourselves from allegations based on information from courts and daily papers as we are a scientific organization and evaluate our members on pure scientific grounds that are based on trust, competence, integrity, and willingness to combat this dreadful disease, cancer, before it strikes. I hope this gives an answer to your first request.

To answer your second request, I welcome a reaction letter to the paper of Dr. La Vecchia and Dr. Boffetta and will publish this in the Eur J Cancer Prev. Scientific discourse in the Journal is welcome. I just want to remind you that this letter should contain only scientific information and that it will be independently judged by two referees, not related to the research groups of Dr. La Vecchia and Dr. Boffetta.

Kind regards,

On behalf of ECP,

Prof. Jaak Ph. Janssens MD, PhD

President