

June 22, 2014

To: Ian Burgess, Publisher, *Current Opinion in Pulmonary Medicine*, Wolters Kluwer
Robert Baughman and Marjolein Drent, Editors in Chief, *Current Opinion in Pulmonary Medicine*

Dear Ian Burgess, Robert Baughman and Marjolein Drent:

I am writing to you regarding the article, *The health risk of chrysotile asbestos*, that your journal *Current Opinion in Pulmonary Medicine* commissioned from David Bernstein and published in your July 2014 issue (<http://journals.lww.com/co-pulmonarymedicine/pages/currenttoc.aspx>). Mr. Bernstein is a consultant who is well known for the work he has done for more than a decade, financed by the chrysotile asbestos industry, to put forward the industry's message that chrysotile asbestos can be safely used.

When the editors of *Current Opinion in Pulmonary Medicine* commissioned this article from Mr. Bernstein, they must have known, it therefore seems, that he works closely with the asbestos industry and promotes the industry's position that chrysotile asbestos can be safely used, which is what the article you commissioned says, as do all his previous articles.

Under Acknowledgements, Mr. Bernstein states that he "has appeared as an expert witness in litigation concerned with alleged health effects of exposure to chrysotile." Under Conflicts of interest, Mr. Bernstein states "There are no conflicts of interest."

I wish to submit a complaint to you that Mr. Bernstein's statement of having no conflicts of interest is not true and that this statement violates the Conflicts of Interest Guidelines of your journal, which require that all authors "must state all possible conflicts of interest in the manuscript, including financial, consultant, institutional and other relationships that might lead to bias or a conflict of interest."

Mr. Bernstein has received repeated funding from the asbestos industry over the past decade to write articles, all of which put forward the industry's position that chrysotile asbestos can be safely used and poses little threat to health.

Mr. Bernstein has also received significant financing from the asbestos industry for more than a decade to travel around the world to speak at industry events and to the media to promote use of chrysotile asbestos. Mr. Bernstein has, for example, received financing from the asbestos industry to give presentations in Brazil, China, Colombia, India, Indonesia, Korea, Mexico, Quebec, Russia, South Africa, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines and Ukraine in support of the use of chrysotile asbestos. Mr. Bernstein has collaborated closely with asbestos industry trade associations, such as the Asbestos Institute, the Chrysotile Institute, the International Chrysotile Association, to promote the

industry's interests and to carry out political lobbying of UN organisations and various governments to advance the industry's interests.

As just one specific, recent example, Mr. Bernstein collaborated with the Zimbabwe government to assist it in its May 29, 2014 launch of an initiative to re-open the Zimbabwe chrysotile asbestos mines and to re-start the export of asbestos by Zimbabwe. At this event, Mr. Bernstein put forward the same conclusions as you have just published, i.e. that chrysotile asbestos can be safely used. It should be noted that, while scientists financed by the asbestos industry support these conclusions, these conclusions have been rejected by reputable, independent scientists and scientific bodies as dangerous misinformation. Not a single reputable scientific body in the world supports these conclusions. See, for example, Position Statement on Asbestos by the International Joint Policy Committee of Societies of Epidemiology <http://www.ijpc-se.org/position.php>. The asbestos industry has, however, the money and the vested interest to keep disseminating this misinformation.

I trust that you share the view that the credibility of a scientific journal requires that the journal ensure that ethical standards are respected, such as compliance with the journal's Conflicts of Interests requirements.

I request that *Current Opinion in Pulmonary Medicine* publish a correction that discloses the actual and extensive nature of Mr. Bernstein's conflicting interests. I request that Mr. Bernstein disclose the list of commissions and how much he has been paid for them over the past five years by asbestos companies, asbestos products companies, asbestos industry trade associations, such as the International Chrysotile Association, and by governments promoting their asbestos industry, such as Russia, Ukraine and Zimbabwe, for writing papers, participating in meetings, speaking at events and speaking to the media, travel and accommodation, per diems, etc.

I look forward to receiving your response on this very serious matter. I will be happy to provide any further information you may require. While asbestos is legally banned in Europe and de facto banned in the United States, so that it is no longer placed in homes and schools in the countries where your editors reside, this is not the case in a number of other countries, such as India and Indonesia.

The article your journal solicited and published by Mr. Bernstein will be of great benefit to the asbestos industry in promoting use of chrysotile asbestos in those countries.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Ruff