

International Agency for Research on Cancer



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CPW/mg

5 September 2014

Dear Dr Lemen,

I am replying to your e-mail messages of 30 July and 4 August 2014 regarding the collaborative research study in Asbest, Russian Federation.

As requested in February 2014, the IARC Ethics Committee (IEC) was provided with the most recent communications from Ms Kathleen Ruff, which raised concerns about possible conflicts of interest of some of the study collaborators in the context of the principles referred to in the *IARC Code of Good Scientific Practice*. The IEC took account of the points made by Ms Ruff and her co-signatories during its latest consideration of the study.

Based on the public health relevance and scientific interest of the study, the IEC reaffirmed its initial decision regarding the ethical approval, provided that the conditions continue to be met to conduct the study to a high scientific standard and free from vested interests.

In addition, the IEC acknowledged that conducting such a study has inherent risks for IARC, in terms of potential conflicts of interest. In this context, the IEC acknowledged the measures put in place by IARC to ensure the independent oversight of the scientific quality of the study, namely the establishment of a Scientific Advisory Board.

Finally, the IEC have informed me that they will continue to monitor the progress of the study on an annual basis, a scrutiny which I welcome. The Agency will continue to pay close attention to the conduct and presentation of this study as it evolves. Consistent with our position, and in line with IARC's approach to all its research studies, the IARC Scientific Council advised the Agency to discontinue participation in the study in Asbest if at any stage the design, conduct or analysis is compromised.

Ms Ruff and co-signatories also referred to an article on asbestos that was co-authored by Dr Paolo Boffetta and published in the *British Journal of Cancer*. In response, the Agency wrote to the journal, informing them of the concerns about possible undeclared conflicts of interest of Dr Boffetta, and also informed Dr Boffetta that it was taking this action. We still await information from the journal as to what action they have taken as a result.

Thank you again for your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CP Wild', with a horizontal line underneath.

Christopher P. Wild, PhD
Director

cc: Ms Kathleen Ruff, Rideau Institute, Ottawa, Canada (kruff@bulkley.net)
IARC Ethics Committee (iec@iarc.fr)