

November 12, 2013

Dr. Christopher Wild
Director, International Agency for Research on Cancer
World Health Organization

Dear Dr. Wild:

We wish to express to you in the strongest terms our concern that Dr. Sergey Kashansky, who IARC has appointed as a collaborating scientist for IARC's Uralasbest asbestos research project, is participating in efforts by the asbestos industry to promote the use of chrysotile asbestos in Asia.

Dr. Kashansky will be a speaker at a [conference](#) to be held in New Delhi, India on December 3 & 4, 2013, entitled Scientific update on safe use of chrysotile asbestos and related products. The conference has been organised by the International Chrysotile Association (ICA), which "actively represents the interest of Chrysotile Industry world over", and the Asbestos Cement Products Association of India (ACPA), whose mission is "to aid, stimulate and advise promotion of Chrysotile Asbestos Cement Products (Sheets and Pipes) in India".

The purpose of the conference is to put forward the industry's message that chrysotile asbestos can be safely used and to promote its continued import and use in India and elsewhere.

Dr. Kashansky will be putting forward the position of the Russian government, which is the same position as that of the asbestos industry. The Russian government claims that chrysotile asbestos can be safely used without causing any harm to health and that it should continue to be mined, used and exported. Russia exports 84% of the asbestos that it mines, much of it to India, which is by far the biggest importer of asbestos in the world, importing 473,240 tons in 2012. The aim of the conference is to defeat the efforts of the World Health Organization to stop the use of chrysotile asbestos in Asia.

Dr. Kashansky's support for use of chrysotile asbestos is not new. In 2002, he co-signed a submission from a group of Russian scientists to the European Union opposing any ban on the use of chrysotile asbestos.

Dr. Kashansky is promoting the economic interests of the Russian asbestos industry and the Russian government. It is, in our view, a dangerous precedent and entirely unacceptable that IARC has appointed as a collaborating scientist a person who works with the asbestos industry to defeat the efforts of the WHO to protect public health by ending the use of chrysotile asbestos. How many deaths will be caused thanks to the efforts of the asbestos industry and Dr. Kashansky to put more asbestos in homes and schools in India? India is a country where there is virtually no regulation and no protection once asbestos has been placed out in the community to deteriorate over time from wear and tear, demolition, and natural disasters.

Dr. Kashansky's involvement in the marketing efforts of the asbestos industry and the Russian government to promote export and use of asbestos represents a conflict of interest that contravenes the ethical standards that IARC is supposed to observe.

We request that you forward this letter to IARC's ethics committee.

Sincerely,

DR. BARRY CASTLEMAN, ScD, Environmental Consultant, USA; author, Asbestos: Medical and Legal Aspects, USA

DR. SANJAY CHATURVEDI, MD, FAMS, FIPHA, FIAPSM, Professor of Community Medicine, University College of Medical Sciences, Delhi, India

DR. ARTHUR L. FRANK, MD, PhD, Professor of Public Health, Drexel University School of Public Health, Philadelphia, PA, USA

DR TUSHAR KANT JOSHI, FRCS, FFOM, Director, OEM Programme, Centre for Occupational & Environmental Health, Maulana Azad Medical College, New Delhi, India; Former Occupational Health Consultant, WHO India; Fellow, Collegium Ramazzini

DR. RICHARD A. LEMEN, Ph.D., MSPH, Assistant Surgeon General (ret.), Rear Admiral, USPHS (ret.); Adjunct Professor, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University, Atlanta, GA, USA

KATHLEEN RUFF, author, Exporting Harm; Senior Human Rights Adviser, Rideau Institute; Co-coordinator, Rotterdam Convention Alliance (ROCA)

DR. COLIN L. SOSKOLNE, Professor Emeritus, Department of Public Health Sciences, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada; Adjunct Professor, University of Canberra, Australia; two term Past-President, Canadian Society for Epidemiology and Biostatistics (2007-2009, 2009-2011)

Note: Titles and affiliations are given for identification purposes only. Some of the signers have been involved in asbestos litigation.

Copies to:

IARC Ethics Committee
Margaret Chan, Director General, World Health Organization