

To: Alan Shepard, President and Vice Chancellor
Board of Governors
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec

November 3, 2015

Dear President Shepard and members of the Board of Governors:

We have received the letter of October 26, 2015 from President Shepard. We are disappointed that Concordia has failed to deal seriously and appropriately with our complaint of scientific and ethical misconduct.

The secretive, token investigation of its own conduct that Concordia has carried out demonstrates an extraordinary level of superficiality. This is in complete contradiction to the President's statement that Concordia takes our complaint very seriously.

The investigation lacks transparency, independence and credibility.

The investigation has ignored our complaint regarding harmful, false information in the report, which promotes the use of chrysotile asbestos and states that the scientific evidence supports the use of chrysotile asbestos. The report puts forward dangerous misinformation, claiming that exposure to high levels of chrysotile asbestos (ten times higher than is legally permitted in Canada, the European Union and the United States) causes no harm to health.

This is not an abstract matter. The false information put forward in Concordia's report will cause harm and loss of life, particularly in the global South, where the asbestos industry continues to sell close to two million tons of chrysotile asbestos every year, claiming it is a product that can be safely used. The report has been widely circulated as purportedly a reputable report, commissioned, funded, approved and published by Concordia University. The report will certainly help the asbestos industry to sell asbestos.

It is shameful, in our opinion, that Concordia is allowing its reputation to be used to promote false information to help sell asbestos and harm populations overseas.

The only feeble action that Concordia has taken is to stop promoting the report on its website and to admit that it was "inadequate" conduct on the part of Concordia not to disclose that the author of the report, John Aylen, a lecturer at Concordia, served as a consultant for the asbestos industry. Concordia has made a vague statement that it will deal more adequately with conflict of interest matters in the future.

The token action Concordia has taken to address the wrong-doing we have documented demonstrates, in our opinion, irresponsibility and a lack of ethics. Concordia has taken no action whatsoever to reject the dangerous, false information it has published or to address any of the serious concerns that we raised in our letters of July 24 and July 27, 2015 to President Shepard and our letters of August 5 and September 14, 2015 to President Shepard and to the Board of Governors.

We bring to your attention an editorial in the British Medical Journal (BMJ), "A major failure of scientific governance" (<http://www.bmjjournals.org/content/351/bmj.h5694>), which condemns the failure of Memorial University to take proper action to address false information put forward in an article by one of its academics. The BMJ has retracted the article by the Memorial University academic and is calling for an independent investigation so that lessons may be learned and wrongdoing avoided in the future.

In our opinion, this BMJ editorial is relevant to the failure to date of Concordia University to take responsible action in the face of false information the University has published, that violates academic standards and that causes societal harm.

- * We call on Concordia to retract the report.
- * We call on Concordia to carry out a credible, independent and transparent investigation so that Concordia can regain the trust and respect of the public.

We ask that the Board of Governors be given the letter we sent to them on August 5, 2015, as well as this current letter. We believe that the failure, to date, of Concordia to uphold the academic and ethical integrity of the university is a serious matter and that the Board of Governors has a responsibility to address it.

We look forward to receiving the response of the President and the Board of Governors.

Sincerely,

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NOTE: Titles and affiliations are given for identification purposes only.