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TESTS AND STUDIES FOR AND AGAINST J&J TALC - JURY STILL OUT

January 22, 2019, 9:45AM. By *Jane Mundy*

STUDIES AND TESTS OVER SEVERAL DECADES INDICATE THAT J&J TALC DID CONTAIN ASBESTOS, BUT OTHER STUDIES HAVE FOUND OTHERWISE OR REMAIN INCONCLUSIVE.

Santa Clara, CA — Despite a number of **asbestos-talc lawsuits** and studies to the contrary, Johnson & Johnson still stands by its talcum powder, asserting it doesn't cause mesothelioma or ovarian cancer because their product sold to consumers never contained asbestos. J&J says plaintiffs are using attorney-driven science along with faulty studies. On the other hand, plaintiffs have brought scientific evidence showing studies linking talc exposure to cancer, adding that the giant pharma company knew the link for decades. As for the FDA, it's still on the fence.



Why are juries handing out billion-dollar settlements if the evidence isn't based on fact? Recently, **Reuters** dug deep and uncovered documents going back to the 1970s indicating J&J knew its talc contained asbestos. However, although studies have proven the link between long-term use of J&J's talc and ovarian cancer, it is not yet determined that talcum powder is a definite cause. And the **New York Times** concurred with Reuters, which said that Johnson & Johnson executives and other affiliated parties were aware from the 1970s to the 2000s that the company's talc materials sometimes tested positive for asbestos.

J&J said that there is no evidence Johnson & Johnson baby powder contains asbestos now. But perhaps it did a few decades ago. And another argument that talc did contain asbestos is that other carcinogens have been found. As late as 2009, the **Campaign for Safe Cosmetics** group hounded J&J to eliminate probable human carcinogens from all its products. The **Guardian** reported that, after three years of petitions, negative publicity and a boycott threat, the company agreed in 2012 to eliminate the ingredients 1,4-dioxane and formaldehyde from all products by 2015. (Why would it take six years?)

JOHNSON & JOHNSON TESTS AND STUDIES

J&J meeting minutes from 1974 obtained by *Reuters* show that J&J researchers tested talc to demonstrate that some cancerous fibers were OK! They put baby powder on a doll and sampled the air around it to determine how much powder would float up and stand to be inhaled (asbestos in lungs can cause mesothelioma). The researchers determined that exposure would be below the

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) limit of five fibers per milliliter of air. Not only was it a bad cover-up, J&J did its own testing rather than an unbiased third party.

A 1970s study of almost 2,000 Italian talc miners told the researchers the results J&J wanted, and J&J hired a ghostwriter to redraft the article that presented the findings in a journal. "The study was proposed by William Ashton, J&J's longtime talc supply chief, who had miners' medical records compiled by an Italian physician, who also happened to control the country's talc exports," reported Reuters. But Reuters uncovered reports from 1957 and 1958 by a consulting lab describing contaminants in talc from J&J's Italian supplier as fibrous tremolite, which is classified as asbestos and is linked to mesothelioma.

STUDIES INDICATING J&J TALC CONTAINED ASBESTOS

Several studies have shown that asbestos is — or was — present in talc. Here are a few conclusions:

In December 2018, Health Canada stated that using talc powder on the genital area increased the risk for ovarian cancer. Additionally, they are considering warning labels on products.

Two case-control studies published in 2016—the African American Cancer Epidemiology Study (AACES) and the New England study—suggest that talcum powder causes the body to develop inflammation, which is known to potentially cause the growth of cancer cells.

The Internal Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health in 2014 **concluded** that "a specific brand of talcum powder contained identifiable asbestos fibers with the potential to be released into the air and inhaled during normal personal talcum powder application. We also found that asbestos fibers consistent with those found in the same cosmetic talc product were present in the lungs and lymph node tissues of a woman who used this brand of talc powder and developed and died from mesothelioma." (No brand other than J&J has been linked to asbestos.)

The **Ovarian Cancer Association Consortium** in 2013 found a 33 percent increased risk of ovarian cancer with long-term use of talcum powder products. And in 2016 the journal *Epidemiology* published a study that showed women using talcum powder to dust their genitals also faced a 33 percent increased risk of developing ovarian cancer.

Other studies dating from the 1930s can be found [here](#).



ASBESTOS TALC

the Cosmetic, Toiletry, and Fragrances Association (CTFA), which is the trade association representing the cosmetic and care products industry, issued voluntary guidelines stating that all talc used in cosmetic products in the US should be in detectable amounts of asbestos according to their standards. In 1996 the U.S. National Toxicology Program determined causes tumors in animals, even without asbestos present and it listed talc as a dangerous substance. Still, the FDA to impose regulations on cosmetic talc products. The FDA's non-action is because talc is considered a cosmetic and as es not have to undergo FDA review or approval (with the exception of color additives) before they go on the market.

g to the **FDA**, "Cosmetics must be properly labeled, and they must be safe for use by consumers under labeled or

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...ary conditions of use. Cosmetic companies have a legal responsibility for the safety and labeling of their products and
nts, but the law does not require them to share their safety information with FDA."

monitors for potential safety problems with cosmetic products on the market and takes action when needed to protect public health. Before we can take such action against a cosmetic, we need sound scientific data to show that it is harmful under its intended use."

Because FDA's cosmetic laboratories do not have the equipment needed to perform the analyses, it contracted with AMA Analytical Services to conduct a laboratory survey which ran from September 28, 2009 to September 27, 2010. AMA contacted nine suppliers to request samples of its talc. (Shouldn't there be more control than simply trusting the manufacturer? What if company XX sent company ZZ's talc as a sample?) The FDA said that the survey found no asbestos fibers in any of the samples containing talc. The results were limited, however, by the fact that only four talc suppliers submitted samples and by the number of products tested. *The manufacturers did not submit to the lab talc that was on the market a few decades ago.*

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