

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Amphibole Fibers, Chrysotile Fibers, and Pleural Mesothelioma

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**KEY WORDS:** *pleural mesothelioma; asbestos; transmission electron microscopy*

We were interested to read the letter by Dumortier et al. 1998. Although they present some interesting data, their two specific comments have little bearing on the potency of chrysotile asbestos in causing mesothelioma of the pleura. The comment about the ability of electron microscopy to detect small chrysotile fibers in analyzed material ignores the point that in lung tissue evidence suggests that chrysotile fibers may be split longitudinally and then fragmented into short segments. This process would lead to loss of chrysotile recognizable by electron microscopy. This and other theories to explain the rapid clearance of detectable chrysotile fibers from lung tissue have been discussed in detail by Churg et al.

[1984] as cited in our article [Smith and Wright, 1996]. Based on the work of Dumortier et al. and others cited in our article, it would seem reasonable to conclude that both chrysotile and amphibole fibers are present at the target site for pleural mesothelioma causation.

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### REFERENCES

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