



The Collegium Ramazzini and the Town of Carpi are pleased to have the opportunity of aknowledging the gratitude of public health scientists to

## FRIEDRICH POTT

from Düsseldorf, Germany, for his distinguished basic contributions to the knowledge of carcinogenesis from natural and man-made fibres, as Ramazzini Lecturer and recipient of the Ramazzini Award for 1991.

The reports in 1935 of asbestos-associated-lung cancer by Lynch and Smith, and Gloyne, inititated a new phase in cancer etiology and cancer research: fine inorganic fibres could cause malignancies in people. This was never considered before but was soon seen as a major public health problem in view of the ubiquity of asbestos exposure and the resulting frequency of lung cancer and mesothelioma.

Experimental pathology was given the task of deciphering the mechanisms and pathogenetic influences which underlay such carcinogenesis. Much information was developed concerning the nature of the fibres, their dimensions, surfaces, structure and composition. But with this knowledge came, *pari passu*, new questions, because as asbestos use was diminished or eliminated, new types of inorganic fibres were to replace it. These were largely man-made and their biological effects uncertain.

Industrial and commercial requirements required that the replacements were to possess dimensions similar to the asbestos for which they had been substituted. The question naturally arose: would the new man-made inorganic fibres produce the same cancers as asbestos? The problem was an urgent one because the new materials were being widely introduced throughout industry, in buildings, homes, chemical plants, powerhouses, refineries and ships; indeed, wherever insulation was needed, with resulting exposures of millions of workers and community residents to the new fibres.

Epidemiological data bearing on the question of man-made inorganic fibres have been limited and it may be some years yet before firm conclusions can be drawn as to the extent of hazard to humans from exposure to these materials.

In this predicament, we have turned once again to experimental pathology for guidance. And in this, one to whom we have turned with the greatest confidence and expectations has been Professor Friedrich Pott of the University of Düsseldorf.

Professor Pott's research into the carcinogenic potential of inorganic fibres has not only been meticulous, extensive, precise and thorough. It has been accompanied by thoughtful analytical consideration of how the results can provide perspective, direction and advice about what we should do from a public health point of view to meet the dilemmas posed by the introduction of man-made inorganic fibres. His masterful review of the complexities of the variations seen in different experimental routes of exposure is a classic contribution to the history of experimental pathology.

Carpi, November 22, 1991

IRVING J. SELIKOFF, M.D. President

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