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*For immediate release*

24 June 2015

## **THE COLLEGIUM RAMAZZINI RELEASES OFFICIAL POSITION ON THE GLOBAL HEALTH DIMENSIONS OF ASBESTOS AND ASBESTOS-RELATED DISEASES**

***18<sup>th</sup> statement of the international academy affirms long-standing position calling for a ban on all mining, manufacture and use of asbestos.***

The [Collegium Ramazzini](#) (CR), an international academy of 180 scientists from 35 countries, experts in environmental and occupational health, has released an official statement on the global health dimensions of asbestos and asbestos-related diseases.

Asbestos is a proven cause of human cancer, and all forms of asbestos have been listed as definite human carcinogens by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the cancer agency of the World Health Organization. Since 1993, the Collegium Ramazzini has repeatedly called for a global ban on all mining, manufacture and use of asbestos. The Collegium has taken this position based on well-validated scientific evidence showing that all types of asbestos, including chrysotile, the most widely used form, cause cancers such as mesothelioma and lung cancer, and showing additionally that there is no safe level of exposure. The Collegium reaffirms its long-standing position that responsible public health action is to ban all extraction and use of asbestos, including chrysotile. This current statement updates earlier statements by the CR with a focus on global health dimensions of asbestos and asbestos-related diseases (ARDs).

Occupational exposure to asbestos causes an estimated 107,000 deaths each year worldwide. These deaths result from asbestos-related lung cancer (ARLC), mesothelioma and asbestosis. In countries having banned asbestos, as well as in countries still using asbestos, a large number of workers remain at high risk of developing ARDs from past exposure, in particular lung cancers and mesotheliomas. Most of these previously exposed people remain in the general population without any ongoing health monitoring. The Collegium recommends that countries develop strategies for identifying their previously and currently asbestos-exposed workers, to quantify their exposure, and register them, subsequently developing methods for continuous health surveillance and secondary prevention. In addition to workers there should be monitoring of household members of workers if they bring asbestos into their homes.

The ARD epidemic will likely not peak for at least a decade in most industrialized countries and for several decades in industrializing countries. Asbestos and ARDs will continue to present challenges in the arena of occupational medicine and public health as well as in clinical research and practice, and have thus emerged as a global health issue. Industrialized countries that have already gone through the transition to an asbestos ban have learned lessons and acquired know-how and capacity that could be of great value if deployed in industrializing countries embarking on the transition. The accumulated wealth of experience and technologies in industrialized countries should thus be shared internationally through global campaigns to eliminate ARDs.

Collegium Ramazzini Fellow Ken Takahashi, Professor of Environmental Epidemiology and Director of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Occupational Health at the University of Occupational and Environmental Health (UOEH), Kitakyushu, Japan, notes “The highest priority in reducing ARDs is primary prevention; that is, banning asbestos use in countries where it remains legal and preventing exposure to in situ sources in all countries with historical asbestos use.”

Collegium Ramazzini President Philip J. Landrigan, MD, MSc, Dean for Global Health and Ethel H. Wise Professor and Chairman of the Department of Preventive Medicine in the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai School in New York comments: “Given that ARDs are 100% preventable, zero new cases of ARDs should be the ultimate goal for both industrializing and industrialized countries. The pandemic of ARDs is an urgent international priority for action by public health workers.”

The statement The Global Health Dimensions of Asbestos and Asbestos-related Diseases is available on the Collegium Ramazzini website:

[http://www.collegiumramazzini.org/download/18\\_EighteenthCRStatement\(2015\).pdf](http://www.collegiumramazzini.org/download/18_EighteenthCRStatement(2015).pdf)

Related positions of the Collegium Ramazzini are also available for consultation, including:

Asbestos is Still With Us: Repeat Call for a Universal Ban (2010)

[http://www.collegiumramazzini.org/download/15\\_FifteenthCRStatement\(2010\).pdf](http://www.collegiumramazzini.org/download/15_FifteenthCRStatement(2010).pdf)

Call for an International Ban on Asbestos: Statement Update (2004)

[http://www.collegiumramazzini.org/download/11\\_EleventhCRStatement\(2004\).pdf](http://www.collegiumramazzini.org/download/11_EleventhCRStatement(2004).pdf)

Call for an International Ban on Asbestos (1999)

[http://www.collegiumramazzini.org/download/6\\_SixthCRStatement\(1999\).pdf](http://www.collegiumramazzini.org/download/6_SixthCRStatement(1999).pdf)

Chrysotile Asbestos as a Carcinogen (1993)

[http://www.collegiumramazzini.org/download/3\\_ThirdCRStatement\(1993\).pdf](http://www.collegiumramazzini.org/download/3_ThirdCRStatement(1993).pdf)

The Collegium Ramazzini is an international scientific society that examines critical issues in occupational and environmental medicine with a view towards action to prevent disease and promote health. The Collegium derives its name from Bernardino Ramazzini, the father of occupational medicine, a professor of medicine of the Universities of Modena and Padua in the late 1600s and the early 1700s. The Collegium is comprised of 180 physicians and scientists from 35 countries, each of whom is elected to membership. The Collegium is independent of commercial interests.

Press contact:

Collegium Ramazzini

Kathryn Knowles

[collegium@ramazzini.it](mailto:collegium@ramazzini.it)