MINNESOTA TACONITE WORKERS HEALTH STUDY

Respiratory Health Survey of Taconite Workers & Spouses

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University of Minnesota research team

School of Public Health:
• Dr. Jeff Mandel
• Dr. Ian Greaves
• Dr. Bruce Alexander
• Dr. Gurumurthy Ramachandran
• Leslie Studenski, coordinator
• Diane Kampa, coordinator
• Nancy Tekautz, RN, field supervisor

Medical School:
• Dr. David Perlman
• Cheryl Stibbe, RN
Background

• University of Minnesota asked by the State to study whether exposure to dust from the taconite industry is harmful to workers and spouses
Why we’re here

• To explain how the survey will work
• We want your feedback and comments
• We need your help encouraging workers and retirees to participate
Respiratory health exams begin this summer

- Identifying scientific sample of current & former workers from employment records of mining companies
- Conduct respiratory health exams of 1,200 current and former workers and 800 spouses
- Plan is to complete health surveys by end of 2010
Who will be asked to participate?

• Selection is based on employment records from multiple companies and includes:
  – A range of ages
  – A variety of years of working in the taconite industry
  – Workers from different Range locations
You may receive a letter from the U of M asking you to participate

• If you are contacted, it is critical that you call to schedule your appointment as soon as possible
• Ensures a successful study and timely completion
Respiratory exam conducted at Virginia Regional Medical Center

- Exam itself will take approximately 2 hours
- We will reimburse mileage or provide transportation if needed
Clinic appointment includes:

• Health history questionnaire (mailed to you before your visit, completed at home, and checked with you at your visit)
• Two types of lung function/breathing tests
• Chest x-ray
• Physical exam and blood sample
Why should you participate?

• This is a large, important study that will determine whether lung conditions may be associated with exposure to dust from taconite operations

• Your findings may assure current & future mine workers that they are working in a safe environment
Additional benefits…

• Tests may reveal a medical condition that you need treatment for
• Test results may aid your doctor if you need follow-up care
What happens after the clinic visit?

- You receive a summary of your results
- Test results sent to your doctor with your permission
- If you need a doctor, we will help you find one
Concerns & Questions

Why are some spouses included?

• Spouses may have been exposed to dust brought home on workers’ clothing
Why is this taking so long since we first heard about the study?

• We need to collect the information about workers from multiple companies
• We need to put procedures in place to ensure your privacy and confidentiality
• Needed time to set-up testing procedures, facilities and medical professionals to conduct the survey
What is happening now?

• Collaboration with mining companies, Virginia Regional Medical Center, health care professionals, unions, retirees, legislators and many community members
• Setting up the selection process and medical exams
• Holding additional public meetings like this
Will my company know I am participating?

• No—the study team will not reveal who participates

• Individual names will not be reported in the results

• The only person who will receive your exam results will be you and your personal physician and only with your consent
What if I am *not* asked to participate but I have health concerns?

- We will assist any current or former miners who are not selected
- We are working with local doctors so they know the types of tests we are providing
- They may be able to administer these same tests if needed
- For more assistance or concerns, call our toll-free number 1-888-840-7590
Don’t we already know there’s a link between taconite work and health?

• No. The work needed to establish a link between the 58 mesothelioma cases and mining has not been done
• No one study has addressed all the health and risk questions related to taconite mining this study will cover
This survey is one part of the Minnesota Taconite Workers Health Study

• Also looking at causes of death among workers, cases of mesothelioma, cancer and other respiratory disease

• Looking at the air and environment by conducting air sampling at workplace sites
We need your help!

• Let your fellow workers and retirees know they may receive a U of M letter
• Encourage those contacted to participate in the study
• You will be part of a large, comprehensive study of health in the taconite industry
• We can’t do it without you!
Next steps

• Look for future public meetings and more detailed info over the next few months
• Your questions & comments are welcome
• Call our toll-free number 1-888-840-7590
• Also, see our website: www.taconiteworkers.umn.edu

Thank you!