



MEDIA STATEMENT



Asbestos Trusts Face Many More Mesothelioma Claims

Up to 233 new claimants suffering from the deadly asbestos related disease, mesothelioma, could still lodge claims against two private sector trusts formed to compensate former asbestos mine workers.

This emerged from research presented today at the International Mesothelioma Interest Group Conference at the Cape Town International Convention Centre¹.

Presenting on behalf of five colleagues, Professor Gill Nelson of the University of the Witwatersrand's School of Public Health, warned the Asbestos Relief Trust and the Kgalagadi Relief Trust that between 144 and 233 more mesothelioma cases can be expected by 2030. This was in addition to the 464 confirmed mesothelioma cases among the 15 057 former asbestos mineworkers included in the study.

Mesothelioma is a cancer of the pleura or peritoneum diagnosed up to 40 years after exposure to asbestos.

The trusts were set up in 2003 and 2006 respectively by the former owners of various asbestos mines throughout South Africa. More than 16 000 former mineworkers covered by the trusts have already been assessed and 5 400 claims to the value of R358 million paid. In recent years the trusts have compensated an increasing number of mesothelioma claimants, who receive a much bigger benefit because of the severity of the disease.

The trusts sponsored research by Nelson and her colleagues to ensure that sufficient funds are set aside for future mesothelioma sufferers.

Although South Africa was a major producer of asbestos for many decades, the trustees had to use international data for mesothelioma projections. Nelson and her colleagues developed a new mathematical model using the trust's mesothelioma data.

The researchers found that although the number of mesothelioma claims against the trusts appeared to have peaked in 2009 - and would slow with the passage of time - the trustees could plan for 183 further cases until 2030 (with a range of between 144 and 233 cases).

¹ **Burden of mesothelioma in a cohort from the Northern Cape asbestos mining region of South Africa: a prediction model for 2013 to 2030.** Gill Nelson, Benn Sartorius, Jill Murray, Tobias Chirwa, Markus Heitz and Jim teWaterNaude.