

Message to William Kloepfer:

P210 #1



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**MINNESOTA TOBACCO LITIGATION**

Dear Bill:

In regard to the polonium-210 "talking notes" sent on 2/11, please find below a cleared version for your use. Ms. Walker and Mr. Panzer requested clearance also. The material below is to be considered cleared for their use as well.

Robert Northrip

In a recent letter published in the New England Journal of Medicine on February 11, 1982, Drs. T. H. Winters and J. R. Di Franza claim that polonium-210, a radioactive substance reportedly found in tobacco smoke, causes lung cancer in smokers. According to the letter, the presence of polonium-210 in tobacco smoke is a result of the use of phosphate fertilizer in the cultivation of tobacco. Phosphate fertilizer, it should be noted, is normally applied by farmers to vegetables and other food crops and by homeowners to lawns and houseplants. Coal-burning electric power plants are a major source of polonium-210 in the air.

This hypothesis was first proposed about 18 years ago and is still just that, a hypothesis. In fact, the authors unaccountably fail to mention recent research reports which cast serious doubt about the validity of the hypothesis.

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One such study published in a 1980 issue of Archives of Environmental Health examined this question. The investigators wrote that their results did not support the hypothesis that radioactivity in cigarette smoke contributes to the association between smoking and lung cancer. Another study, conducted here in the United States, was cited in the 1981 Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health. According to the Surgeon General: "In the case of polonium-210 a recent indepth study raises doubts on the significance of polonium-210 as a factor contributing to lung cancer in smokers."

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