

Parental Anti-Asbestos Activity and its Empowerment

Anon

The guardian of S Nursery School, Japan

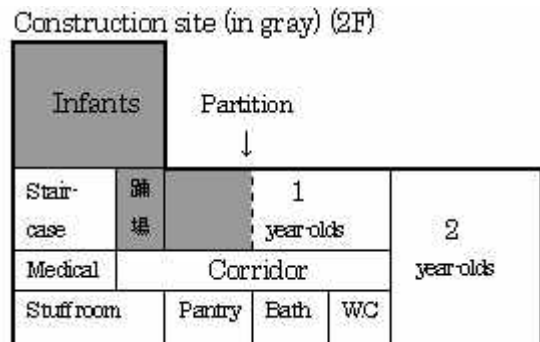
Abstract

In 1999, more than 100 children (aged 0-5) were exposed to asbestos in a ward nursery school for 2 weeks. The local government missed asbestos on the blueprint and scheduled school building renovation while the nursery was open, in spite of misgivings by parents about latent asbestos. When the nursery rooms were full of dust and asbestos, the officer in charge neither stopped the renovation work nor let the children leave.

Since the disaster became known, parents took a lead in stopping construction, moving children to safety, disclosing the truth, and taking care of the children and their parents.

Empowerment of Parental activity

- (1) Participation of parents:
 - Communication;
 - Sympathy in anxiety & anger and catharsis;
 - Variety of skills.
- (2) Specialists:
 - Knowledge and advice;
 - Support parental activity;
- (3) Support from outsiders.
- (4) Technology and environment:
 - Internet;
 - Nursing;
 - Parents' Association and name lists;
 - Speed and efficiency.



Barriers to parental activity

- (1) Harm to children.
- (2) Incompatible with child care.
- (3) Ignorance or too much fear of asbestos.
- (3) Lack of understanding by family, co-workers, etc.

Chronology

1999:

- April 21* Announcement of construction work by Principal.
- April* Inquiry about latent asbestos by parent. City said: 'May exist but we do not touch'.
- July 5* Construction started.
- July 7* Removal of ceiling; parent found asbestos.
- July 8* Removal of wall.
- July 9* Removal of asbestos-containing boards in pantry and bathroom.
- July 10* Removal of concrete block wall.
Scattered sprayed asbestos and fine particles.
- July 14* Conference with parents and city (1st meeting).
- July 15* Sealing the partition.
Removal of sprayed asbestos at 17 locations.
- July 17* Parents' Association assigned investigator.
- July 19* City approved asbestos exposure
Construction stopped
- July 21* Moved infants and 1-year olds to 1st floor
- July 28* Conference with parents and city (2nd meeting).
City concealed sprayed asbestos exposure.
Parents asked for the asbestos to be covered, for children to be moved to a safe building and for asbestos removal specialists to be called in.
- August 18* Press revealed sprayed asbestos exposure.
- August 20* Conference between parents and city (3rd meeting).
City's apology for concealing problem.
- August 23* Children moved to 1st floor or other nursery.
- September 8* Lecture by asbestos specialists.
- October 25* 1st meeting of Advisory Committee.

2000:

- May* Asbestos removal from building while all the children are at another nursery.
- June* Returned to the asbestos-free building.

2001:

- June* Questionnaire about children's health completed by parents.

2002:

- March 10,11* Interim report by Advisory Committee.

2003:

- August 29, 30* Presentation of Final Report by Advisory Committee.

2004:

- March 7,9* Presentation of measures for children's health.
- April 9* 1st meeting of Specialists Committee.