

WS-F-06 Munehiro Yasumoto (Abstract only)

Activities of Victims and Supporting Organizations to tackle Pneumoconiosis and Asbestos-Related Diseases in Yokosuka

Munehiro Yasumoto

Yokosuka Pneumoconiosis (Asbestos) Victims' Group, Japan

Abstract

Cooperative efforts to tackle pneumoconiosis and asbestos-related diseases in Yokosuka began in May 1982, when an outbreak of asbestos-related lung cancer was reported among U.S. military base and shipbuilding industry workers by Dr. Miura of Yokosuka Kyosai Hospital.

A group of investigators from the Uraga branch of the All Japan Shipbuilding and Engineering Union (SEU), the Kanagawa Occupational Safety and Health Center, and the Kanagawa Workers' Medical Co-op Minatomachi Clinic soon conducted a follow-up survey to identify deceased victims and interviews to check out health damage among retired shipbuilding workers, with the cooperation of Uraga Retired Workers, a group of retired SEU Uraga Branch members. The group also offered retired workers health checkups and registered pneumoconiosis patients with the local Labour Bureau.

From November 1984, the group started to offer health checkup services for members of the Association of Uraga Retired Workers in cooperation with Minatomachi Clinic. This health checkup service was expanded later to include retired workers of the Yokosuka Naval Base, and was conducted every November until 1990. Through these efforts, the number of pneumoconiosis patients who won workers' compensation increased and the Yokosuka Pneumoconiosis (Asbestos) Victims group was set up in November 1985. In July 1988, eight retired workers of Sumitomo Heavy Industries filed a law suit against the company, demanding compensation for lung problems. In September 1989, the Kanagawa Workers' Medical Co-op opened a new clinic in Yokosuka to offer health checkups and health care services to local pneumoconiosis and asbestos-related disease patients.

The support system for pneumoconiosis disease victims was established in Yokosuka between 1982 and 1989. Because pneumoconiosis patients in Yokosuka were mostly shipyard workers, we have always been faced with asbestos problems. As a result, Yokosuka has also been a place to send messages about asbestos issues to people all over the country.