

AVSGF • UK

ASBESTOS VICTIMS SUPPORT GROUP FORUM

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INTERNATIONAL ASBESTOS CAMPAIGNERS CALL TIME ON ASBESTOS

On this Action Mesothelioma Day, Friday 5th July, we join all those world-wide who remember, and demand justice for all those who have died from the fatal asbestos cancer, mesothelioma: an estimated world-wide toll of 38,000 deaths each year.

In the UK, we especially remember Nellie Kershaw, the first worker diagnosed with asbestosis 100 years ago, and the 2,500 people who now die from mesothelioma in the UK each year: the highest number of annual mesothelioma deaths world-wide.

In Nellie Kershaw's memory, and for all those who continue to suffer from mesothelioma we persist with our demand that the multi-national company Altrad, owners of Cape Asbestos, donate £10 million for medical research in atonement for Cape Asbestos deliberately withholding evidence on the risks its asbestos products posed: a 2019 legal case won by the Asbestos Victims Support Groups Forum (AVSGF) in the Supreme Court unearthed documents proving that, from the 1960s, Cape deliberately withheld evidence on the risks its asbestos products posed to human life.

David Ellis whose wife died of mesothelioma, Chairperson of AVSGF, a national charity dedicated to the support of mesothelioma sufferers, says:

'There have been some important developments in mesothelioma research identifying ways in which the treatment of mesothelioma might be radically improved. However, without sustained and vastly increased funding novel treatments will not be developed at pace. That is why mesothelioma sufferers and their families have written to Ran Oren, CEO Altrad, asking him to restart discussions with AVSGF about a substantial donation for mesothelioma research. They deserve a positive response.'

Nevyn Stevenson of AVSGF and Campaign Coordinator says “Cape profited from the sale of its asbestos products, despite knowing the dangers their products caused. When Altrad purchased Cape it assumed the moral obligation to put right some of the wrong that has been done. £10million may not be a lot to ALTRAD but it would make a significant difference to thousands of people’s lives across the globe’

Harminder Bains, a lawyer whose father died from mesothelioma and who, along with the barristers, represented the AVSGF pro-bono to disclose Cape documents says:

‘The demand for £10 million should be a wake-up call for Cape/Altrad. The AVSGF court action broke new legal ground in establishing rights of a non-party to obtain documents disclosed in previous litigation. The judge in the *Bates & Ors v Post Office Ltd (NO 3) [2019]* cited the AVSGF case when allowing the press application for documents relating to the Post Office/Fujitsu scandal. It now seems likely that the Post Office and Fujitsu will be held to account for their past egregious behaviour. It is time for Cape/Altrad to account for its past. The payment of £10 million is nothing for a large, multinational company, but could mean everything for mesothelioma sufferers.’

END

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. Asbestos-related world-wide deaths:
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5982039/>
2. Mesothelioma world-wide deaths: <https://oem.bmj.com/content/74/12/851>
3. Altrad’s acquisition of Cape for £332m in 2017 was a sufficiently attractive commercial proposition to take on Cape’s liabilities.
4. To contact Cape/Altrad for comment, contact Antoine Martinez (Head of Group Communications). Phone +33 (0)4 74 56 42 28. Mobile +33 (0)6 78 09 73 37. Email Antoine.Martinez@altrad.com
5. Cape/Altrad’s Warrington office: Appleton Thorn Trading Estate, Lyncastle Way, WA4 4ST
6. Cape/Altrad’s Rotherham office: Building 2, Fields End Business Park, Davey Road, Thurscoe, Rotherham S63 0JF
7. On average, there are just over 5000 deaths from asbestos diseases per year. This figure includes just over 2,500 deaths per annum from mesothelioma. Asbestos-related cancers continue to be the UK’s largest cause of workplace death. This is due to a latency period between exposure and illness which is typically between 10 and 40 years.

8. The #CapeMustPay campaign has gained cross party support, the backing of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Occupational Safety and Health, and the backing of the TUC.
9. To date, 47 MPs have signed Early Day Motion 93 (tabled 23rd May 2022) in support of the campaign. See: [link](#)
10. On 10th July 2023, asbestos victims and anti-asbestos campaigners laid wreaths at the memorial to asbestos victims in Barking Town Square. Cape had an asbestos factory in Barking until 1968. Barking & Dagenham has one of the highest rates of mesothelioma in the country. Later on 10th July 2023, Parliamentarians met Cape Must Pay! campaigners on Parliament Square to show their support.
11. Mesothelioma is a terminal cancer caused by (sometimes very low) exposure to asbestos. Most victims of mesothelioma die within two years of onset of symptoms. Currently there is no cure. Symptoms include pain, breathlessness, and progressive debility. Commonly pain becomes severe so that morphine is required and sometimes it is intractable despite large doses of morphine. Breathlessness may become severe as the tumour progresses to constrict the lung so that it cannot expand. The tumour may spread to constrict the heart and it may spread to the other lung. Sometimes the tumour spreads to other parts of the body including the abdomen where it may cause swelling due to the accumulation of fluid, pain, vomiting and bowel disturbance.
12. Victims of mesothelioma need increasing levels of assistance during the last six months of their lives. Most become completely incapacitated and in need of constant nursing care towards the end of their lives.
13. Research into treatments for mesothelioma is chronically underfunded compared to that for other cancers. Currently there is no government funding.
14. Sign the online petition, click this [link](#). To read more about the campaign and to access the documents, click this [link](#).