

The past is prologue; Universities in Service to Corporations: The McGill-QAMA Asbestos Example

Beginning in the 1930s, the Canadian asbestos industry created and advanced the idea that chrysotile asbestos is safer than asbestos of other fiber types. I will critically evaluate published and unpublished studies funded by the Quebec Asbestos Mining Association (QAMA) and performed by McGill University faculty. QAMA-funded researchers manipulated data and knowingly used unsound sampling and analysis techniques to support their contention that chrysotile was "essentially innocuous."

Asbestos mining and manufacturing companies continue to use these studies to promote the use of asbestos in developing countries and the studies continue to impact health policy and compensation.

I will review McGill's response to this history and propose that McGill and other Universities establish formal procedures and review mechanisms to monitor the industrial-university complex. The subjects of corporate funded research including workers, consumers or patients and their representatives should have a role in the design of research and should oversee research while it is being performed. Blinded data (results) should be made public on the internet.