

Sir Richard Doll: Death, Dioxin, and PVC

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Abstract

Some months after his death in 2005, while researching Sir Richard Doll in the Wellcome Institute library, I came across Doll's correspondence with Monsanto in which Monsanto awarded him an increased consultation rate of £1,000 a day, whenever he did their bidding. I had been looking for evidence of Doll's conflict of interest since the mid nineties when I found out about the case of Epidemiologist Lennart Hardell. In 1985, this Swedish epidemiologist had given evidence to the Australian Royal Commission on the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam. At the end of the Commission, that had, from the beginning, been a creature of Monsanto, Doll wrote to Justice Phillip Evatt, who had presided over the hearings, suggesting not only Lennart Hardell's evidence but the whole of his academic output on the subject of Dioxin should be struck from the academic record. When I heard this and then met Hardell, I made up my mind that I would do everything I could to clear his name.

In 1998, I published an article, 'Sir Richard Doll, a questionable pillar of the cancer establishment', in *The Ecologist*. This article showed how Doll had always taken the side of industry in toxic disputes. In 2003, I researched and wrote an essay that centred on Doll's work on PVC. While my research didn't solve the riddle of his vicious attack on Hardell, it clearly revealed a very close relationship between Doll and the chemical industry.

Unfortunately, even after I added the information about Doll and Monsanto, my essay had little impact. In 2006, I was able to include the information about Doll in a paper published in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, 'Secret Ties to Industry and conflicting Interests in Cancer Research' (Hardell *et al.*).

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