

TO: Prof. Jaak Ph Janssens, President, European Cancer Prevention Organisation, Editor-in-Chief, European Journal of Cancer Prevention
Members of the Board, European Cancer Prevention Organisation

February 15, 2014

Dear Prof. Janssens and ECPO Board Members:

Further to your [letter of February 10](#), we are extremely disappointed that you and the board members of the [European Cancer Prevention Organisation](#) (ECPO) fail to see anything improper in the conduct of Carlo La Vecchia or in the article by La Vecchia and Paolo Boffetta, [Role Of Stopping Exposure And Recent Exposure To Asbestos On The Risk Of Mesothelioma](#), published by the [European Journal of Cancer Prevention](#).

Your letter puts forward two reasons as to why you see nothing improper:

- 1) No letter to the editor was submitted after the publication of the article.
- 2) You rely on authors to declare conflicts of interest.

Neither of these reasons addresses the serious improprieties documented in [our letter of January 28](#), that we asked the ECPO to thoroughly and transparently investigate.

We draw to your attention the following facts:

- Researchers may or may not choose to write a comment letter. This does not remove the obligation of responsible editors to accurately re-examine a paper published in their journal when their attention is drawn to serious improprieties.
- As stated in our letter, rather than being a survey of the scientific literature, the article is biased and partial so as to support the position Drs. La Vecchia and Boffetta were paid by the Montefibre company to put forward in court.
- Your response states that the [Italian Association for Cancer Research](#) funded the article. We informed you that Dr. Maria Colnaghi, Scientific Director of the Association, [stated that the Association did not fund the article](#). Why is ECPO indifferent to having published false funding information? Will you publish a correction of that false information and disclose who funded the article?
- In between testifying on behalf of the Montefibre company in March 2011 and again in November 2011, Dr. La Vecchia submitted the article, which puts forward the same arguments he was being paid to present in court. This is clearly a conflict of interest that it was ethically necessary to declare. If the EJCP considers that this is not a conflict of interest that needs to be declared, then the [conflicts of interest policy of the EJCP](#) is not worth having and the EJCP is misleading and betraying its readers. You state that you raised the conflict of

interest issue with Dr. La Vecchia, who said he had correctly stated that he had no conflict of interest. Please explain in detail why you believe that the conflict of interest we documented is not a conflict of interest. Or does the EJCP wash its hands of its responsibility to ensure that its conflicts of interest policy is upheld?

- Your letter does not address the concern we raised regarding Dr. La Vecchia's role as a founding share-holder and a Director of Research for the consulting company, IPRI Services, that has published numerous articles which come up with distorted conclusions, favourable to the industry that financed the article, and which deny harm caused by substances that have been recognized by IARC and the reputable scientific community as known carcinogens, such as diesel fumes, Agent Orange and formaldehyde. We would be happy to provide evidence.

Whether testifying in court or through his consulting company, Dr. La Vecchia had the right to do work, on behalf of industries, that denies harm of known carcinogens. Your organisation and journal, however, claim to be dedicated to preventing "this dreadful disease, cancer, before it strikes" (to quote your words). It is, in our view, a betrayal of public trust when your organisation and journal place in a leadership position a person who sanctions exposure to known carcinogens, with consequent increased risk of cancer. This is the opposite of prevention and the opposite of the mission you claim to pursue.

The concerns we have raised and documented are very serious and relate to the scientific and ethical credibility of the ECPO and the EJCP. The response that we have received is token and superficial and discredits both the ECPO and the EJCP.

We therefore request that you submit this letter and our earlier letter to the EJCP's [International Advisory Board](#) and ask them to ensure that a thorough, transparent review of our complaint is carried out and a full, public report provided.

We believe that, since you were directly involved in Dr. La Vecchia's article by acting as the peer reviewer and approving its publication, you are not in a position to objectively deal with this matter, since it is not possible to objectively judge oneself. We therefore ask that someone who is independent be put in charge of handling this matter.

We look forward to hearing the views of the International Advisory Board on these critical issues. In the meantime, we would appreciate receiving responses to our above questions.

Please note I do not have the title "Dr". My background is in the field of human rights.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Ruff, kruff@bulkley.net

On behalf of the signers