



CARD NEWS

Center for Asbestos Related Disease

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The Voices of Libby

... is coming soon!

Make your voice heard!

The Voices of Libby is a community-based research survey that will be sent to 1,200 residential households in Libby in the coming weeks. The research survey addresses significant health, economic & social issues relevant to the Libby area. Upon completion of the survey, each participant will be entered to win Rosauers gift cards worth up to \$100.

Partners in The Voices of Libby Project are Karmanos Cancer Institute, Lincoln County Campus of Flathead Valley Community College, and the Center for Asbestos Related Disease.

The Voices of Libby Project

Karmanos Cancer Institute

In mid February, *The Voices of Libby Project* will begin! This is a community-wide research survey that is being conducted by Karmanos Cancer Institute in partnership with CARD and the Lincoln County Campus of Flathead Valley Community College. The survey concerns important health, economic, and social issues and the many ways in which the Libby community and its residents have been affected by asbestos related issues. The study is important to understand community issues and to learn how best community organizations can communicate with and provide support to the Libby community.

Many of you probably remember Karmanos Cancer Institute who did a focus group project in Libby in the spring of 2006. Many types of community members participated and they learned there are many different views about different aspects of the asbestos issues in Libby. However, we do not know what views are most common or what influences how people react to asbestos issues in terms of their own beliefs and behaviors. That is why this survey project is important.

1,100 randomly selected households in the Libby community and

100 randomly selected patients from CARD will receive the survey. Only patients who agreed to be contacted for future research as part of the all-inclusive consent could be selected for CARD's random sample. However, another possibility is that you may be a patient who just happened to be selected for the community wide random sample. Regardless of how you were chosen, we hope you will take the time to complete the survey. We realize the questionnaire is pretty long, but that is why Karmanos is offering an incentive. If you complete and return the survey you will be eligible to win 1 of 50 prizes ranging from \$40 to \$100 in Rosauers gift cards.

In addition, by completing the survey you will be helping your community. Responses to the survey will help us better understand Libby community members' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, related to asbestos issues. This will serve as a potential basis for future education, appropriate responses, and healing in the community.

If you are selected, in mid-February you will receive a letter announcing the upcoming survey. Then the following week you will receive the survey in the mail. As with all research activities there are protocols in place. Therefore, we will also be sending reminder cards. So come the middle of February, sort through the junk mail to see if you were selected, as we are excited to hear your voice!

The Reason for Recalls

Annual health screening is recommended for anyone exposed to asbestos. There are many reasons why getting annual screening is important but this isn't always obvious to those of us who aren't doctors and nurses. Therefore, we thought it might be helpful to answer some of the most commonly asked questions.

I already know I have an asbestos related lung abnormality but I feel totally fine. Why should I get an annual screening? Cancer screening is one of the most important reasons to get your annual check up, regardless of how you feel or your asbestos related disease status.

Why is cancer screening so important? Having an asbestos exposure greatly increases a person's risk of developing lung cancers and mesotheliomas (cancers in the lining around the lungs, heart, or abdominal cavity). Annual screening is the best way to manage this risk because early detection leads to improved treatment outcomes. It was recently reported in *The Nation's Health, October 2007* (American Public Health Association's newspaper) that the lives of more than 100,000 U.S. residents could be saved annually if services like flu vaccinations and cancer screening were used more often and more effectively. Therefore, considering the fact that everyone exposed to asbestos is at high risk, it is in your health's best interest to take advantage of the free annual screening.

I was tested before and was fine, so why do I need to come back again for an annual screening? Despite the importance of cancer screening mentioned above, asbestos exposure involves a latency (delayed) period before lung changes happen. With

asbestos related diseases, this latency period can be as long as 40 years. Thus, annual screening is necessary as lung abnormalities can still develop despite a clean bill of health last year.

There is nothing you can do for ARD so what's the point of getting an annual check up? Other than screening for cancer, many of the symptoms of asbestos related diseases can be managed or treated which could help you feel and function better on a day-to-day basis. But knowing how best to manage symptoms is only possible after we evaluate how your lungs are functioning and take a look at your chest via x-ray and a medical examination by a doctor.

Who will pay for this annual screening? As long as you lived in the Libby area for 6 months prior to 2000, you can get annual screening at no cost by signing up for LAMP's (Libby Asbestos Medical Plan) annual asbestos health screening benefit. This benefit includes an evaluation by a doctor, a complete Pulmonary Function Test (PFT), an x-ray, and a CT scan if needed. If you already have the Grace Libby Medical Plan (administered by Health Network of America/Triveris) they will also cover the cost of an annual screening that includes the PFT, chest x-ray, and doctor visit.

What if I live far away and can't travel to Libby to get screened at CARD? CARD offers long distance screening (LDS) for patients who are unable to travel to Libby but who are still interested in getting screened by CARD. Prescriptions for the necessary tests are sent to the patient so they can have the PFT, x-ray, and CT (if needed) completed in their local community. They also complete paper work that reports symptoms, how lung function is impacting their daily life, and other information a nurse would usually collect. Dr. Black then reviews all of this information and the "appointment" with him is held over

the phone. If someone is interested in this type of screening, contact Cheryl Fox, at 406-293-9274 ext. 30 to start the process.

If your own personal health is not reason enough to get your annual screening, what about for the benefit of all people exposed to asbestos?

People who get annual screenings and choose to have their de-identified health information included in the CARD research database will help the world better understand Libby amphibole asbestos. Better understanding of the disease, will result when we match different exposures with different health outcomes. This is valuable in so many ways; from guiding research towards new treatments to understanding what levels of exposure put a person's health at risk. It is also very important to know that asbestos health screening and deciding to be in the research database are two completely separate choices a person can make. If a person chooses to be screened but does not want to be in the database, CARD will respect that choice, as people's health always is the #1 priority at CARD.

Federal Appropriation for CARD

Together Senator Baucus and Senator Tester stepped to the floor and secured an appropriation of \$248, 580 for CARD! We are very appreciative of their hard work as these funds are critical to support the infrastructure of CARD. This will allow CARD to continue providing important services including healthcare, research, education and outreach to those affected by Libby amphibole asbestos.

YOU, ME, and the PFT! -Ashley Day, CARD Respiratory Therapist

“Keep blowing! Keep blowing! Keep blowing!” It’s the dreaded phrase you may know all too well, and at CARD we understand that “the breathing test” is not always easy! It’s a lot of work; it’s tiring, and quite extensive. However, it is a very important piece of the puzzle.

An annual pulmonary function test (PFT) or “breathing test” is taken by almost every patient at CARD. Not only do the results give a good understanding of lung function, but they help make correct diagnoses when compared with X-rays. The set of tests we perform at CARD tell our doctors how well you are getting air in and out and how well the oxygen is crossing over into the blood, all things an X-ray alone will not show.

Typically, we like to have our patients have a breathing test once a year. Some may say this is too often. However, with this type of asbestos disease, one year can be enough time for the disease to initially present or progress. Some people may never have progression and others have progressed quite rapidly, and the only way to monitor everyone properly is by having annual PFTs.

At CARD the PFT includes a series of four tests. Each test tells about a different part of your lung function.

Some pulmonary labs may offer more or less testing depending on the equipment used and the doctor’s orders. The first test is called a spirometry and it allows us to see how much volume, in liters, you can

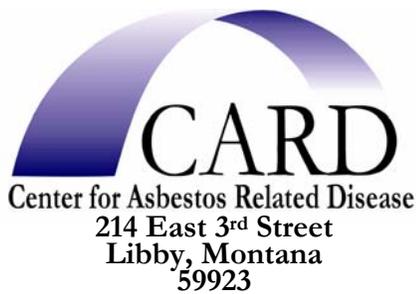
**Your Pulmonary
Function Test is a
very important
piece of the puzzle!**

get in and out forcefully. The second measures a variety of different volumes that exist in your lungs such as: how much total air you hold in your lungs, how much air you have left in your lungs even after getting it all out, and the total gas volume which is an indicator of a pressure that exists between your mouth and the very end of your lungs. This pressure holds your airways open and allows you to breathe oxygen in and carbon dioxide out appropriately. Thirdly, we do a diffusion test which determines how much oxygen is actually getting through the lungs, into the blood, and going to the rest of the body. Finally, we give some albuterol and do the first test again. This will tell us if you have an asthma-like component or “obstruction” taking place in the lungs, and if albuterol or something similar would be an appropriate medication to prescribe.

There are two kinds of disease processes that can alter a person’s ability to breath. A restrictive process is when a person has a hard time getting air in, an obstructive process is when a person had a hard time getting air out. Obstructive respiratory diseases include: emphysema, COPD, chronic bronchitis, cystic fibrosis, and asthma. All other respiratory diseases are considered to be restrictive, including asbestos related diseases. However, some patients affected by Libby amphibole asbestos may show a combination of having an asbestos related disease component, and asthma or other obstructive abnormality.

The set of tests done at CARD do require the patient to attempt each test 2-3 times or more. This ensures us that we are getting your best effort with the best results. If you have a scheduled PFT when you come to CARD it is recommended that you do not use bronchodilators such as combivent or albuterol (proventil or ventolin) four hours before testing. Also, schedule your PFT at a time during the day where you feel your best. PFT’s can be very tiring, so having you perform one at your best time of day will be easier for you, and may give us more accurate results.

So, the next time you come to see us and have a PFT scheduled, remember how important it is. The results are extremely useful and important in helping us work with you to understand and manage the health of your lungs.



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THE BIG CARD NEWS

State Funding for Asbestos Related Healthcare

Many of you took action in lobbying the state of Montana to pass House Bill 407 for 3 million dollars for asbestos healthcare funding. This bill didn't pass but our efforts paid off because 1.5 million dollars (to be used over the next two years) was added to the Department of Health & Human Services budget for asbestos healthcare funding! **GOOD WORK EVERYONE!** Lincoln County applied for these funds to go towards sustaining ARD NET (Asbestos Related Disease Network) and the LAMP (Libby Asbestos Medical Plan) program for two more years.

ARD Net Services (406-293-4600) will continue as before providing direct services through case management, home assistance services, and nurse consultations as needed. The LAMP program (1-877-889-8405) which provides comprehensive asbestos health screenings and supplemental benefits will have to undergo some very minor changes because of the new funding source, but plan members will be appropriately notified by mail. These programs do have some eligibility criteria that must be met in order for people to receive benefits.

Although this is a great "fix" for funding some of the asbestos healthcare needs for the next two years, it is important to remember that we also need to stay focused on working together for more comprehensive and long term solutions. When another opportunity presents, remember that it is very important to get involved as a few voices speak softly but there is **POWER IN NUMBERS!**