

# Preface

Although the asbestos disaster is not a recent phenomenon, comprehensive studies have not been developed with an interdisciplinary approach to elucidate the problem. Most asbestos studies have been conducted in medical science, but social science has not produced satisfactory investigations. Because asbestos issues as well as those in other kinds of pollution have been decisively influenced by social, economic, and political structures, the social sciences should contribute to studying them by integrating natural sciences. Even in social science, segmented specialties have hindered comprehensive understanding of asbestos issues. For example, although the asbestos disaster comprises both labor and environmental issues, they have been divided into economic and legal aspects.

This book originated from the asbestos research project at Ritsumeikan University, based in Kyoto, beginning in 2005. The project has been a unique interdisciplinary study as it has incorporated medical science, economics, political science, law, architecture, and environmental engineering.

The work focuses on asbestos issues in Japan as it relates each chapter to diverse sciences. This approach reflects an interdisciplinary perspective as well as a comprehensive understanding of Japan's asbestos problems, but it should be applicable to studies in other countries.

Chapter 1 introduces a political economy approach to explore asbestos problems as a subject of social science and to investigate the methodology of interdisciplinary study of asbestos issues. Chapter 2 characterizes the asbestos disaster as a “complex stock disaster” that demands new scientific approaches, and it provides a comprehensive review of asbestos issues in Japan. Chapter 3, through a historical review of asbestos issues in Japan, discusses the factors in the spreading of asbestos, such as social application of medical knowledge, activities of governments and industries, economic advantages of asbestos products, and the knowledge gap among stakeholders. Chapter 4 describes asbestos-related diseases with historical data on the use of asbestos in Japan. Chapter 5 focuses on industrial asbestos pollution caused by the Kubota Corporation in Amagasaki, Hyogo Prefecture. Chapter 6 explores the asbestos disaster in the Sennan District of Osaka on the basis of a historical analysis of political economy, and discusses the government's responsibility in the disaster. Chapter 7 describes the realities facing asbestos victims in these areas, with interviews of victims, and the dynamic processes

involving those victims and the supporting organizations, companies, national and local governments, lawyers, and others. Chapter 8 deals with the international aspects of the asbestos industry and disaster involving Japan and South Korea in a historical perspective. Chapter 9 focuses on delayed public policies in Japan with attention to the divisions of responsibility of, and actions taken by, various ministries and other governmental organizations. Chapter 10 traces the political process in legislation of the Act on Asbestos Health Damage Relief, primarily through an analysis of information provided by newspapers. Chapter 11 centers around asbestos used in construction and the problems in maintenance and demolition management, with accident data on construction workers suffering asbestos-related diseases. Chapter 12 explores countermeasures enacted by local governments against asbestos problems in construction and proposes an obligatory policy of cooperation between national and local governments. Chapter 13 comprehensively summarizes asbestos-related lawsuits and points out decisive legal aspects of the asbestos disaster in Japan from a broad perspective. Finally, Chapter 14 introduces the French asbestos compensation system FIVA as a complement to the relief measures and compensation systems existing in Japan.

It is hoped that this volume will serve as a textbook on asbestos issues for all countries, especially where there is widespread use of asbestos. The lessons of asbestos problems and policies in Japan are particularly important for developing countries in Asia, Central and South America, and southern Africa. Knowledge about asbestos damage, its causes and the responsibility for it, compensation and relief systems, relief activities in emergencies, and future measures to be taken is imperative to prevent the proliferation of asbestos disasters in those regions.

The studies reported in this book were subsidized with Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (title number: 18310036, 21241014).

Kenichi Miyamoto  
Kenji Morinaga  
Hiroyuki Mori  
*Editors*

Asbestos Disaster

Lessons from Japan's Experience

Miyamoto, K.; Morinaga, K.; Hiroyuki, M. (Eds.)

2011, XVIII, 318 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-4-431-53914-8