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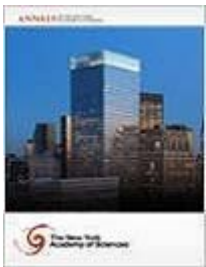
INFLUENCE OF CRYSTALLIZATION HABIT OF MINERALS ON IN VITRO CYTOTOXICITY[†]

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First page of article

INFLUENCE OF CRYSTALLIZATION HABIT OF MINERALS ON *IN VITRO* CYTOTOXICITY*

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The health hazards caused by exposure to commercial asbestos particles are well known. The question, however, still remains whether the nonasbestiform equivalents of these minerals to which people may be exposed in mining, quarrying, and other activities can also have adverse effects on human health. Identification of minerals in various crystallization habits and their interactions with biological systems is pertinent. Unfortunately, direct study of the physical, chemical, and biological properties of all minerals and their varieties would be an extremely expensive and time-consuming project. A more practical approach is to define the physical and chemical properties of minerals and their varieties in different categories and test them simultaneously in selected biological systems. It is conceivable that extrapolations can be made to relate specific mineralogical properties to specific biological activities.

Several attempts have been made by other investigators to relate physical and/or chemical properties of minerals with biological properties. While some studies revealed that hemolysis of mammalian erythrocyte is related to mineral surface area,^{1,2} others have shown that it depends on surface charge,^{3,4} and yet others have indicated a relationship to magnesium content.^{5,6} In an earlier study, we demonstrated that still another mineral characteristic—namely, asbestiform crystallization habit—is responsible for sheep erythrocyte hemolysis and rabbit alveolar macrophage cytotoxicity.⁷

The study is designed in an attempt to define the roles of physical and chemical characteristics in the biological system. Four samples of cummingtonite-grunerite series in different crystallization habits are selected. In preparation for biological studies, these minerals are ground to obtain samples of various particle sizes. All samples are characterized for chemical composition, size distribution, and surface charge. Biological activity of the samples is assessed in terms of cell lysis of sheep erythrocytes and cytotoxicity to Chinese hamster ovary cells.

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