Study of Workers in the Lead Industry in the UK

The Institute of Occupational Medicine (IOM), based in Edinburgh, is carrying out a study of the long-term health of workers who were monitored for occupational exposure to lead in the lead industry during the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is anticipated that the study will be completed during 2013. IOM are a not-for-profit organisation based in Edinburgh in Scotland. For more information about IOM, see www.iom-world.org. For more information about the study see www.iom-world.org/research/lead.php.

What is the purpose of the study?
At present there is no clear evidence that occupational exposure to lead affects the risks of dying from various diseases. This study aims to assess the evidence for or against such associations, by comparing the death rates in a group of 10,000 or so workers who worked in the industry in the 1970s and 1980s with those in the general population. It will also investigate whether death rates differ between those with lower and higher blood lead measurements. The study is being led by Professor Damien McElvenny, a very experienced epidemiologist.

Why am I being told about this now?
We want to bring this study to the attention of the original participants, or their close family relatives, in order to inform them that this new study is taking place. Anyone from the original study who does not want their details used in the new study may opt out by contacting us.

Will my details be kept confidential?
Yes. IOM will not disclose details of any worker studied to any third party, except for the purposes of obtaining death details for those participants that have died, nor will we identify anyone in any publications arising from the study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
This study may help identify whether there are any additional health risks from having been exposed to lead while working in the UK lead industry.

What happens to the results of the research study?
The IOM will publish the results of the study in a paper in a scientific journal. We will also notify the industry of the results of the study in the same way we used to distribute this leaflet.

Who is organising and funding the research?
The study is being funded by the Colt Foundation, a registered charity (http://www.coltfoundacion.org.uk/).

Who has reviewed the study?
The study has been reviewed by a National Health Service Ethics Committee and also by the Department of Health’s National Information Governance Board’s Ethics and Confidentiality Committee. It has also been reviewed by the NHS Data Access Advisory Group and Scotland’s Privacy Advisory Committee. The study team members have received approved researcher status from the Office for National Statistics for this study. If you wish to seek further advice in relation to your lead exposure, we suggest you contact your employer or your trade union.

What am I being asked to do?
If you’re happy for your details to be included in the new study, then you need do nothing. If you (or a relative on your behalf) don’t want your details to be used in the new study, then please contact the study team directly at lead.study@iom-world.org or 0131 449 8051. If you’re not sure whether you were included in the original study, the IOM study team will be happy to check. If you request your details to be removed, IOM will ensure your wishes are respected and those details are removed from the study.