

SO THAT IT IS NOT FORGOTTEN

We are Maria Jesús and Yolanda Masa García, born in Baracaldo (Bizkaia). Our father worked in a company dedicated to transforming rock mineral into asbestos fibre. In the following lines we give a brief account of what happened to our family.

Our father Jesús Masa Espina worked since 1961 in the company Montero Fibras y Elastómeros, S.A. located in Retuerto (Baracaldo - Bizkaia), whose activity was asbestos and rubber industries.

In 1977 he was diagnosed with first-degree asbestosis. The company decided to relocate him to another job, carrying out surveillance and control duties. He had to undertake both trade union and judicial fights against the Social Security Institute so that his total permanent disability was recognised in 1980.

He died in 1997 from mesothelioma pneumonia at the age of 66. A disease with no possibility of treatment, terribly distressing for the whole family... it suffocates you. When the symptoms worsened, the doctors told us about the possible link between their activity and this disease in the direct members of the family.

When he died, my sister was 26 years old, and I was 32. My mother, Matilde García Lopez, a housewife by profession, became a widow at the age of 65.

During this time, we received news periodically of colleagues of my father who were passing away. In January 2003, my mother began to suffer from back pain, which became progressively worse. Everyone thought it was caused by muscle pain, bad posture... This pain increased and after several medical tests at the University Hospital of Palencia, the University Hospital of Valdecilla and confirmation during a visit to the University Clinic of Navarra, she was diagnosed with pleural mesothelioma in May of the same year. This type of cancer is specific to direct contact with asbestos due to coexistence and handling of work clothes. She died on 24 September 2003.

Since our family has been suffering from the terrible scourge of asbestos, we have wanted to contact an association or organisation to present our case so that it would not be forgotten. It may be too late, but with this letter we "need" to put on record the consequences of this terrible disease.

We have lived directly with the illness of our loved ones, seeing and experiencing all the suffering caused, from which we are left in a permanent state of alert when we have any "pulmonary symptom". The primary care service is aware of this medical story and follows-up our situation.