

Gabriel Rivera

Dr. Deborah Poe

English 201

12 November 2014

### Proposal/Exploratory Essay

For my research paper I will be discussing why World Trade Center rescue and recovery workers deserve medical benefits due to illnesses they have contracted as the result of exposure from dust and debris present at ground zero. In the years that followed the events of September 11 there has been an increase in the number of rescue workers who have become ill. This has caused the expansion of the debate as to whether there is a clear connection between what has transpired and the surge in disease amongst the workers. This debate in turn has made it difficult for those who are seeking medical assistance. Even with the passage of the James L. Zdrzaga Act the government has aligned itself with the notion that further research must be done thereby making the ability to qualify for benefits under the act more difficult. I intend to make the distinction clear and prove that in fact there is a correlation between the 9/11 rescue efforts and illness. To do this I will use evidence from the peer-reviewed medical journals *Environmental Health Perspectives* as well as information from sources including *The New York Times*, Anthony DePalma's book *City of Dust*, and *Time* magazine.

In my research I found two articles from the peer-reviewed medical journal *Environmental Health Perspectives* that will help validate my position that there is a connection between illness and 9/11. Both articles were written by professionals in the medical field which allows me to gather expert opinion on the subject. In each case they both use a scientific

approach to study the results of exposure to the debris and dust at ground zero. One article, “Case Report: Lung Disease In World Trade Center Responders Exposed to Dust and Smoke: Carbon Nanotubes Found in The Lungs of World Trade Center Patients And Dust Samples.” examines the impact of dust caused by the collapse of the Twin Towers to the lungs of rescue and recovery workers who inhaled it. By reading this article I was able to learn the make-up of the dust. I found out that dust particles observed in samples were also found inside the lungs of first responders. Before my research I had not given much thought on the destructiveness of the dust. To find out that shards glass and aluminum were breathed in by first responders made me understand how deadly the dust was. The other article is “Cancer Incidence in World Trade Center Rescue and Recovery Workers, 2001-2008” is about a seven year study of over 20,000 rescue and recovery workers determinate the rate of cancer incidents among them. What I learned from this source is that responders have a 15% higher chance of having cancer. This number is cumulative as many different cancers such as Hodgkins Lymphoma is taken into account. It’s already horrific enough that cancer risk is running high amongst the workers. What makes it worse is to realize that the numbers reported encompass multiple cancers into consideration.

Anthony DePalma’s book *City of Dust* discusses the health disaster amongst rescue and recovery workers following 9/11. The book gives first hand accounts from first responders and medical professionals who are charged with examining the dust. First responders provide accounts of how they realized their health was failing and details the deterioration of their health in light of the fact that they were pretty healthy before their time spent at ground zero. The

medical professionals mentioned in the book have conducted medical experiments that provide strong data relating to 911 illnesses.

*The New York Times* provide me with the article “Not Enough Evidence to Link 9/11 and Cancer, a Federal Report Says” written by Anemona Hartcollis published in July 2011, describes a federal study that concludes that the link between cancer and ground zero isn't clear enough. This article made me aware that based on that conclusion first responders are now unable to obtain benefits until further study. The workers who labored at the World Trade Center during and after the attacks put their lives at risk to help others. They worked in dangerous conditions having to contend with jagged steel beams and deep crevices which could all serve to injure or possibly kill them. Not once did those men and women think about themselves in their efforts to help others and make a horrendous situation better. So why then must they be subjected to being stripped of the right to have medical benefits to cover treatments or even worse make attaining those benefits more difficult. The James L. Zdrzaga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act was passed in 2010 meaning that those who meet the requirements under the law should receive aid.

Laura Blue's article "Study Hints at Potential Increased Risk of Cancer Among 9/11 Rescue Workers" for *Time* magazine reports on a study released by the *Journal of the American Medical Association* which discovered that workers face a higher risk of cancer by being exposed to the debris at ground zero. I learned from this article that about 22,000 rescue and recovery workers have a 43% higher risk of procuring prostate cancer. For such a large group of individuals to have the same odds with cancer is proof that there is a connection between the fallout at the World Trade Center and the influx of illness that are now affecting workers. The article mentions that the statistic originates from the *Journal of the American Medical*

*Association* which is a peer-reviewed journal. This mean there is a substantive amount of evidence within the article for it to be featured in the journal.

Enough scientific data and first hand accounts exist to solidify my position .By researching the topic of disease and the relationship it shares with the dust and debris from the World Trade Center I have been able to decide on a central claim. Rescue and recovery workers who worked at ground zero following the attacks on the World Trade Center deserve medical benefits as they are contracting lung illnesses and cancers from inhaling hazardous toxins in the air.