

The Department of Labor has recently instructed more than 1,100 coal miners to re-apply for black lung benefits indicating that the miners may have been wrongly denied. The medical review of x-rays for these miners by a doctor at The Johns Hopkins Hospital has been called into question.

According to the [Department of Labor's website](#), a bulletin issued June 2, 2014 included instructions 'not to credit negative chest x-ray readings for pneumoconiosis performed by **Dr. Paul S. Wheeler** of Johns Hopkins University Hospital in the absence of persuasive evidence rehabilitating his negative readings.' Wheeler is a staff radiologist at Johns Hopkins whose medical opinion of hundreds of x-rays was that miners did not suffer from black lung when in fact they did.

[ABC News](#) and [The Center for Public Integrity](#) last year released a series of stories after a yearlong investigation revealing that lawyers for coal companies hid reports confirming black lung and that doctors consistently failed to diagnose black lung in miners who were later revealed to in fact suffer from black lung. It was this investigation that prompted government officials to review and evaluate the federal Black Lung Benefits Programs. Legislation is being introduced in the Senate to strengthen the program. Johns Hopkins announced that it is conducting an internal investigation as well, and announced in the press that, 'While our review is ongoing, nobody at Hopkins – including Dr. Wheeler – is performing black lung [x-ray readings].'