

THE RECORD

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Things in Environment

Many Agents Cause Cancer



AP Wirephoto

Victor

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three male contenders without

NEW YORK (AP) — From the chimney sweeps of old London to the vinyl chloride workers of today, man has been finding that things in his environment cause cancer.

The most recent suggestion of a cancer-causing agent in wide use came this week with reports that ordinary hair dyes might be carcinogenic, cancer-causing, or mutagenic, causing birth defects. The cosmetic industry strongly rejected the suggestion.

It was in 1775 when the first finding of an environmental carcinogen was made, by the famous English surgeon, Dr. Percival Potts. He discovered that chimney sweeps were susceptible to cancer caused by the soot.

The American Cancer Society has said there may be scores of unknown, hidden cancer-causing agents in the environment. And there is the obvious, and well-known agent, the cigarette, it says.

"But for each such obvious carcinogen, we suspect that there are in our environment

scores of unknown, hidden carcinogens, whose action is so subtle as to avoid detection in this manner," it added.

During the past 50 years, a wide range of occupation-related cancers have been recognized: bladder cancer in rubber and aniline dye workers; lung cancer among men working with uranium ore, nitrogen mustard and chromate and nickel dust; and nasal-sinus cancer among woodworkers. Most recently, a rare liver cancer has been found among workers handling the plastic substance vinyl chloride.

One example is asbestos, linked first to lung cancer in insulation workers who smoke, then further linked to cancers of the esophagus, stomach, colon and rectum.

In 1964 and 1965, Dr. Irving J. Selikoff of the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine and Dr. E. Cuyler Hammond of the American Cancer Society unexpectedly found a moderate excess of gastrointestinal cancer among New

York insulation workers.

The numbers of workers involved, however, was too small to permit firm conclusions at first, but the observation held up. A study of insulation workers in the United States and Canada, covering the period 1943 to 1971, found a substantial number of deaths over what was expected from those cancers. Selikoff and Hammond found. Similar findings have been made in Belfast insulation workers.

Selikoff has warned that there could be an "epidemic" of a once-rare cancer among the millions of men and women who were directly or indirectly exposed to asbestos while they worked in shipyards during World War II. The cancer is mesothelioma, a tumor of the lining of the chest or abdomen.

Scientists believe the mesothelioma is caused primarily by exposure to asbestos particles, which lodge in the tissues of the body and remain there indefinitely.

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