

MEETING AT ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH COMMITTEE

(MCA Sponsored—A meeting of cooperating PVC producers and the Institute of Industrial Health, University of Michigan)

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JANUARY 24, 1967

Attendees from Union Carbide Corporation were:

Dr. E. Q. Hull
Dr. C. U. Dernehl
Mr. R. N. Wheeler, Jr.

This meeting was called to discuss tentative plans for an epidemiological study within the PVC industry to determine, if possible, the cause and incidence of a possible occupational health hazard.

The MCA proposes employment of the University of Michigan Institute of Industrial Health to make an industry-wide study of this problem. Dr. W. L. Sutton, Chairman, noted the following:

1. All participants should try and avoid discussion of the problem outside of the meeting.
2. Where discussion of the problem is unavoidable, it should be confined to the experience of the individual participants.
3. Any publicity or public information concerning the over-all study will be released by the University of Michigan Institute of Industrial Health. The content of the release has been approved by MCA. Each participant will be informed at the time of such a release. The objective is to avoid or neutralize unfavorable publicity.

Doctor Magnuson, Director of the Institute of Industrial Health, pointed out that we know the following items:

1. The syndrome is relatively rare.
2. The largest prevalence occurs among PVC reactor cleaners.
3. The syndrome is not known to occur in fabricators of finished polymer.
4. Time is important.

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The problem could be studied via a toxicological or epidemiological study. The use of a toxicological study is not believed to be feasible because the syndrome is difficult to reproduce in animals. The epidemiological study will be confined to persons now employed in the production of monomer, polymer, and resin compounds. Data collected from the industry study will be compared to data collected from a study of the adult population of Tecumseh, Michigan. Members of the industry should take pains to be honest and cooperative; the data supplied should be as accurate as possible.

The basic plan of the study is as follows:

1. Hand X-rays, occupational history, and medical history of each employee will be obtained and compiled by computer.
2. Control data from the population of Tecumseh, Michigan, will be computerized similarly.
3. Process information containing raw material lists, flow sheets, operating conditions, and concentrations of various materials within the process will be collected from participants and coded to preserve its confidentiality.
4. Plants of participants will be surveyed by a team of physicians and industrial hygienists from the Institute.
5. A study of data collected should permit identification of possible agents or conditions that cause the syndrome.

There was considerable discussion with regard to the need for study of the monomer and resin compounding plants. While it was agreed there were no known cases in these areas, the need for bracketing the trouble area was believed essential. Unfavorable publicity with regard to exposure of finished products to the human anatomy could be very damaging to the industry. The FDA generally insists that products be proved non-toxic.

There have been no new developments since the meeting on October 6, 1966. Monsanto has X-rayed all employees producing PVC in their Springfield, Massachusetts plant without positive results. Esso Chemical has examined all production, maintenance, and laboratory personnel at their Sarnia Plant without positive results.

The conduct of the study will involve the following:

1. All participants will obtain hand X-rays, job history, and medical history of employees associated with the production, maintenance, shipping, and quality control of vinyl chloride monomer, polymer, and

resin compounds. Only employees currently working in these areas are to be studied. The job history should go back to January 1, 1960. Medical examination other than hand X-rays is to be optional with participants and is not believed to be essential.

2. Process information can be supplied the visiting specialist or mailed directly to Doctor Magnuson by registered mail. The process information should consist of flow-sheets, raw materials, and other pertinent process data. Concentrations of materials within the system may be defined in general terms, such as dilauroyl peroxide is less than 1%. Dates showing when use of a particular material was initiated or discontinued are desirable. Companies using licensed processes should study their licenses; they may have to obtain permission from their licensors to release the necessary data. Confidential process information will be known only by Doctor Magnuson.
3. The University of Michigan Institute of Industrial Health will have the hand X-rays read by two radiologists. Each company will be informed of the results on their employees.
4. A team consisting of no more than six physicians and hygienists will visit each plant to study the facilities. They may want to examine a few representative employees. This examination is optional with participants.
5. The University of Michigan will compile all data and issue a final report to all participants.

The study will take approximately six months, and they hope to have the first plant visit in about three weeks.

The study at Union Carbide will be confined to the Charleston, Texas City, and Bound Brook plants per Dr. C. U. Dernehl.

R. H. Wheeler

RNWheelerJr/ra

Copy to:

Mr. J. H. Barrett (515)
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Mr. J. H. Field (515)
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(3) - Sending you 2 extra copies in case you would like to send them to interested people in Bound Brook RNW

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