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Ex-Goodrich worker studied

Liver damage grew though cause was removed

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NEW YORK — A 38-year-old employe of the B. F. Goodrich plant on Belle Lane in Louisville, who was removed from exposure to vinyl chloride 2 1/2 years ago because of signs of liver damage, showed signs of additional liver damage when doctors operated on him recently.

According to a scientist who has studied the man's case, it indicates that removing workers from areas of exposure to the chemical does not insure that they will not develop angiosarcoma, a rare liver cancer.

The scientist said the Louisville man's case also showed that no tests had yet been developed that could detect early the extent of liver damage caused by exposure to vinyl chloride.

Thus, he said, there may be more vinyl-chloride workers with angiosarcoma in which the disease has not been detected.

Angiosarcoma, thought to be caused by exposure to vinyl chloride, was the topic here yesterday as the New York Academy of Science opened a two-day symposium on the toxicity of vinyl chloride and polyvinyl chloride.

The Louisville man's case was among the highlights of the discussions and papers that brought several hundred scientists here from throughout the United States and abroad.

For nearly 12 hours, the symposium reviewed the results of studies on workers, manufacturing plants and the chemical. Because seven of the 14 angiosarcoma cases discovered among vinyl-chloride workers worldwide were found at the Louisville Goodrich plant, that group was the subject of several of the papers presented.

Among the results presented here yesterday:

- There have been 11 cases of liver disease uncovered at the Louisville plant in addition to the seven angiosarcoma cases. These cases were found through liver biopsies.

- One doctor who has studied the Louisville cases closely says he believes that it is not merely a liver disease that they are dealing with, but a disease that can be spread anywhere in the body through the blood vessels.

Under the arrangements of the conference, no findings presented were to be attributed to their authors. The society said this was to encourage a free exchange of information. It also said none of the findings should be interpreted as a consensus, because there would be differences of opinion on interpretations of results.

But the scope and depth of the conference made clear that vinyl chloride and

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its effects are a major concern both here and abroad.

Among the cosponsors were the American Cancer Society and two federal agencies that deal with occupational safety and health.

Among the other findings reported yesterday:

- Preliminary indications are that exposure to vinyl chloride may cause more than liver diseases and, in fact, has tentatively been linked with heart disorders and abnormal functions of the urinary system.

- The lack of a screening procedure to detect diseases has scientists pessimistic about early discovery.

- Abnormal liver functions have been found in workers who are not involved directly in polyvinyl- or vinyl-chloride production but handle products made from the raw material.

Medical researchers from West Germany reported finding six cases of liver disease in workers who were converting finished plastics from vinyl chloride into floor tiles.

If this trend expands, scientists say, it will ultimately affect many more thousands" than the [illegible] workers currently involved in vinyl-chloride production in the United States.

- Early results from foreign studies show that angiosarcoma and other cancers have been produced in animals at lower levels of exposure to vinyl chloride than previously thought.

Earlier, scientists said they had not found [illegible] animals at exposure levels [illegible] per million or lower. Now, they say, that approach is outdated.

The conference winds up today with discussions of controlling exposure and continued surveillance of workers already exposed.

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