

In 1907, H Montague Murray published the details of the first patient to die of a lung disease due to the inhalation of asbestos dust. He was a male aged 33 who had worked in the carding room of an asbestos textile factory for 10 years and was the sole survivor of 10 men who had worked with him. He was admitted to the Charing Cross Hospital in 1899 and died in 1900. *Case described in ⑤*

In 1924 W E Cooke published in the BMJ 28.7.24, the post mortem findings and photos of sections of lung containing asbestos fibres and of air with asbestos dust in a patient dying ^{from} the inhalation of asbestos. *Fact 33 - sub. country*

In 1927, 3 papers were published consecutively in the British Medical Journal, 3.12.27 by Cooke, who in this paper coined the word "asbestosis", by McDonald who described the histology of asbestosis and by Oliver (Prof. of Medicine at Durham) who described the clinical characteristics of asbestosis and reported 2 other cases.

In 1928 the report of the Director General of Public Health for NSW for 1927 contained a section by Dr Charles Badham then Medical Officer of Industrial Hygiene on Asbestosis and quoting Cooke's case and a report by F W Simpson on "Pulmonary Asbestosis in South Africa" published in BMJ 1928, 1:885.

In 1930, Merewether and Price published in a HMSO Publication (UK) the effect of asbestos dust on the lungs and dust suppression in the asbestos industry". They found that 26% of 363 employees in the asbestos textile industry had diffuse pulmonary fibrosis. *More detail in 2 articles in J. Ind. Hygiene 1930: 12: 198*

In 1931, a committee was set up and asbestos industry regulations were gazetted the same year. This listed the affected processes and laid down methods to be adopted to reduce dust.

The Lancet Editorial on 19.4.30 reviewed Merewether's work, dealt with Price's recommendations regarding safe guards and stressed that the important factors in the development of asbestosis were the concentration of dust and the length of time of exposure.

"Radiology" July 1931

1931, J V Sparks, Radiologist at the London Chest Hospital, presented a paper reporting 50 cases of asbestosis with post mortem findings in 6. The clinical features were described by Dr Burton Wood who pointed out that cessation of exposure did not stop the progression of the disease. It was stated that a majority of workers got out of the industry after 4 years or less.

1931 Burton Wood and Roodhouse Gloyne described in Lancet 1931, 2,954,57 cases of asbestosis 10 of which were complicated by tuberculosis.

1933, S R Gloyne published in "^{Tubercle} ~~Cubical~~" (July 1933) a detailed account of the histology of asbestosis. In the same year in "^{and} ~~Tubercle~~" (December 1933) Merewether pointed out that exposure to asbestos dust for less than 5 years could result in death from asbestosis. *A MEMORANDUM ON ASBESTOSIS*

1934, B Wood and S R Gloyne published in the Lancet 22.12.34, 2 cases of asbestosis with cancer of the lung, in 100 patients with the disease asbestosis. the following year Gloyne published in "^{and} ~~Tubercle~~" a detailed autopsy report of the 2 cases mentioned above.

1935, Lynch and Smith in the American Journal of Cancer described a case of lung cancer in an asbestos worker (American Journal of Cancer) 24:56.

1938, Merewether in his annual report described asbestos dust as highly dangerous and reported 11.6% of 103 patients with asbestosis develop cancer of the lung.

1933, Dr Charles Badham in the report of the Director General of Public Health for NSW reported the first case of asbestosis in Australia; the man was a mill hand. In 1938, Badham also reported asbestosis in insulating workers. Between 1935 and 1939 Dr Donald Hunter of the London Hospital gave a series of post graduate lectures on Dust Diseases and stressed the importance of asbestos. A disease was described in recognized textbooks of Respiratory Medicine.

1949, Merewether published an important paper. It was his annual report as the Chief Inspector of Factories for 1947. In it he stated that 13.2% of men developing asbestosis died of lung cancer whereas only 1.3% of silicotics did so. In the same year the Journal of the American Medical Association (3.8.49) published an editorial on the subject.

1950, Gordon C. Smith who was then Director of the Division of Occupational Health in the Department of Health NSW, published an article on Factors in Primary Dust Disease in ^{the} Medical Journal of Australia 25.11.50 pointing out that asbestos produced a severe pulmonary disease.

1951, S R Gloyne publishing in the Lancet 14.4.51 described 1205 necropsies done between 1929 and 1949 in 124 of which he found asbestosis. All of the patients with asbestosis had worked under the conditions laid down in the factory regulations of 1931 and 14.1% had died of lung cancer.

February 1950, there was an ILO Conference in Sydney at the School of Public Health at which asbestos related diseases were discussed. Merewether was a speaker. The subject was again aired at the BMA Congress in May 1950 held in Brisbane.

1955, Sir Richard Doll, Brit. Journ. Ind. Med. 1955;12:81 established beyond doubt the causal relationship between asbestosis and lung cancer, an association which had first been seen in 1935. In necropsies on 105 persons employed in asbestos works, lung cancer was the cause of death in 18; 15 of these were associated with asbestosis but 3 did not have asbestosis. In the same year the Lancet published an editorial on the subject.

1960, an important paper was published by J Wagner et al in Brit. Journ. Ind. Med. 17:260. This paper described a definitive link between asbestos exposure and the development of a mesothelioma. For the first time, nonoccupational hazards of asbestos exposure were reported for residents living nearby to asbestos works.

1962, J C McNulty, MJA 2:953 reported the first case of mesothelioma in Australia in an asbestos worker. In 1968 at the Australian Pneumoconiosis Conference he reported the experience of Wittenoom miners and mill workers on the matter of asbestosis and mesothelioma.

Since then a vast literature has been published on the hazards of asbestos dust.

As far as the asbestos industry is concerned a very important publication appeared in 1938; a study of asbestosis in the asbestos textile industry by W C Dressen et al, Public Health Bulletin No.241, August 1938 published by the United States Government Printing Office, Washington 1938. This was a study of 541 employees in American asbestos textile mills which showed that numerous cases of asbestosis developed at levels greater than 5 million particles per cubic foot of dust. A majority (333) had worked for less than 5 years. Dressen concluded that if the dust concentration in asbestos factories could be kept below 5 million particles per cubic foot, new cases of asbestosis probably would not appear.

From the above it is seen that at least in the medical profession there would have been a wide knowledge of the dangers of asbestos by the middle of the 1950's. Because of the free passage of information between Australia, England and America, it is hard to believe that management of asbestos industries would not have been aware of the dangers of asbestos at least in the mid 1950's.

Add: Pneumoconiosis - Vict. Archives
D.L. Gordon Thomas MJA 19/1/57
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