

XVII. MEDICO-LEGAL ASPECTS

Epitheliomata of the skin, caused by occupational contact with mineral oil and paraffin, are included among the compensatory, industrial diseases of many countries [Argentina, Australia (West Australia and Queensland), Belgium, Cuba, Great Britain, Ireland, Rumania, Venezuela, Germany, Russia, and Mexico], and a number of states of the United States (California, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, North Dakota, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Washington).

The scrotal cancer of mule spinners is covered in England by special legislation. In none of the countries mentioned do there exist laws which include primary malignant tumors of the internal organs (lung, gastro-intestinal tract), which arise occasionally simultaneously with or successively to cutaneous cancers, among the notifiable and compensatory industrial neoplasms caused by oil or paraffin in spite of the fact that they may become more likely to be the actual cause of death than the readily accessible cutaneous manifestations (Southam). It may be advisable to recognize such obvious etiological relations in framing future compensation laws so as to obviate evident inconsistencies and injustice in the application of the law.

Finally, mention may be made of the possibility of the occurrence of acute traumatic oil cancers which should find proper consideration in the practical application of compensation law. Barkmeyer reported, for instance, the development of a cancer of the face in a 53 year old female spinner, who had sustained an accidental lesion of the face when lubricating oil sprayed into her face during the work. The compensability of the ensuing neoplasm was denied by the Swiss compensation board. Similar accidental lesions of more serious character are apt to occur in connection with workers around Diesel engines, in which a fine stream of oil is ejected from a jet under high power and may penetrate deeply into the tissue.

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