ASBESTOSIS

by

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Asbestosis is a pneumoconiosis caused by the inhalation of asbestos dust. It is distinct from silicosis in its pathology and clinically. Whether asbestosis will remain a distinct form of pulmonary dust disease or will prove to be of a type common to a number of dusts remains to be seen. So far, it is the only pneumoconiosis, other than silicosis, which has received any considerable amount of study from pathologists, clinicians, and industrial hygienists.

Whereas silicosis has been recognized for many centuries, asbestosis is a newcomer. Asbestos (Canadian) is a hydrated magnesium silicate containing no free silica, but about 44% of combined silica, 43% magnesium, nearly 13% of water, and traces of iron and nickel. While asbestos was known to the ancients, the fabricating of asbestos on a large scale is comparitively new and received a tremendous impetus from its use in connection with automobiles and as an insulating material and a heat resistant for a great variety of mechanical purposes.

While Hoffman, in his celebrated Bulletin on Mortality from Respiratory Diseases in Dusty Trades,(1) called attention to the possible harmfulness of asbestos dust in 1918, it was not until February, 1927 that asbestosis was, so to speak, officially recognized in this country by the filing of a disability claim for workman's compensation in Massachusetts. The claimant was a foreman in the weaving department of an asbestos plant and the claim was upheld by the Massachusetts Industrial Accident Board. This was twenty-seven years after the first fatal case was reported in England by Dr. Montague Murray. In 1910 and again in 1924, a fatal case was reported in England and in 1928, the British Factory