

Similar protective measures have been devised concerning the handling of radioactive substances. However, complete protection against the highly penetrating gamma-rays is difficult to obtain when handling radioactive substances (Hunter; Laborde and Leclercq).

XVIII. MEDICO-LEGAL ASPECTS

Roentgen- and radium-dermatitis and cancer are among the compensable occupational diseases in most countries [Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cuba, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, France, Ireland, Mexico, Norway, Peru, Portugal, Rumania, Sweden, Russia, United States (Carozzi; Laborde and Leclercq)].

The compensation laws in force in the different countries cover in part the specific diseases, in part the causative agents and operations, and in part either two or three of these factors. In most instances the law provides for a maximum period of responsibility, so the extent of protection afforded by the law rests to a certain extent within this clause. In France, for instance, for acute and chronic radium-dermatitis the law permits a delay period of up to one year, that is, within one year after the cessation of the hazardous work which caused the injury, claims must be made. For radium-cancer the delay period is five years. Similarly objectionable laws have been enacted in other countries (International Labour Conference; Laborde and Leclercq; Carozzi). The delay periods are obviously too short to cover an appreciable number of cases. Such limitation clauses entirely disregard the biological character of the disease which the laws are supposed to cover.

In as much as roentgen- and radium-cancers are still serious occupational diseases that must be reckoned with in the future, Groedel and Lossen proposed to place all establishments using radiating energy produced by roentgen-tubes or radioactive substances under the direct supervision of governmental agencies which should be charged with the task of enforcing the installation and observation of adequate technical and medical precautionary measures in these laboratories.

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