

- 775 Byssinosis in Hemp Workers. A. Bouhuys, et al.
Arch. Environmental Health 14, 533-544 (April, 1967).

Severe byssinosis, chronic cough, and other chronic respiratory symptoms are highly prevalent among workers exposed to dust of raw, biologically retted, soft hemp (*Cannabis sativa*). Within this group nonreactors and reactors could be distinguished by the absence or presence of a decrease of forced expiratory volume (FEV_1) during dust exposure on Mondays. The questionnaire interview underestimated the extent of the workers' symptoms. Urinary excretion of a major histamine metabolite (1, 4-methylimidazolacetic acid; MeIAA) was higher on Monday than on Wednesday in those reactors whose FEV_1 decreased on Monday but not on Wednesday. This finding agrees with the hypothesis that the bronchoconstrictive response to hemp dust exposure on Monday is a result of the release of histamine in the lungs. A deleterious effect of long-term hemp dust exposure upon pulmonary function is highly probable: (1) FEV_1 (before dust exposure; adjusted for age and height) was significantly lower among the hemp workers than among a control group (farm workers), although the latter smoked more, and significantly lower among those with byssinosis grades 1 and 2 than among those without or with mild symptoms of disease; (2) 9 out of 20 retired hemp workers had an FEV_1 of half the expected value or less. Among the active workers, abnormally low values of FEV_1 (before dust exposure) were only found in reactors. This supports the assumption that irreversible pulmonary function changes develop primarily in those individuals who are sensitive to the acute bronchoconstrictive effect of hemp dust. There are 25 references.

-- Authors' summary

- 776 Lycoperdonosis. R.D. Strand, E.B.D. Neuhauser, and C.F. Sornberger.
New Engl. J. Med. 277, 89-91 (July 13, 1967).

Lycoperdonosis is the respiratory disease caused by inhalation of large quantities of spores from the mature mushroom, commonly termed puffball. *Lycoperdon* is the genus of fungi to which most puffballs belong. The two most common species, *Lycoperdon pyriforme* and *L. gemmatum*, have worldwide distribution. They may be found July to October, often growing on decaying logs, stumps and woody refuse, generally in dense clusters, and may occasionally be scattered through open fields. The spore fruits of lycoperdon are pear or top shaped, with large, sterile bases. Within the wall, or peridium, of the puffball, vast numbers of club-shaped spores form. At maturity, any external agitation or compression of the peridium cause the spores to be discharged through the apical ostia. A single lycoperdon produces approximately 1.6×10^{14} spores. It is well known to many nonherbalists that some practitioners of folk medicine use the hemostatic effect of the "dust" that can be extruded from puffballs. The concept has been applied to surface wounds and nosebleeds. For the treatment of epistaxis, the usual technic is to hold the puffball under the nose and inhale gently as the spores are puffed, so that the spores adhere to the inside of the nostril. With a massive inhalation of the spores, symptoms become rapidly progressive. Nasopharyngitis occurs within a few hours of exposure, and a form of pneumonitis, appears, accompanied by nausea, a rapid pulse, crepitant rales and dyspnea. The course may be protracted for many weeks, with gradual subsidence of symptoms to complete recovery. Two cases are described in detail. There are 7 references.

- 777 Mesothelioma and Asbestos Exposure. J. Lieben and H. Pistawka.
Arch. Environmental Health 14, 559-563 (April, 1967).

Forty-two cases of mesotheliomas reported from 152 hospitals over a five-year period, were studied with regard to exposure to asbestos. Survivors or employers, or both, were questioned regarding the possibility of asbestos exposure. Ten patients actually worked in asbestos plants; eight lived or worked close to an asbestos industry; three patients were family members of asbestos workers. In ten patients a history of assumed exposure to asbestos was obtained after prolonged questioning. In 11 other patients no history of asbestos exposure could be obtained.

-- Authors' summary

- 778 Asbestos Bodies in the Lungs of Inhabitants of Milan. I. Ghezzi, G. Molteni, and U. Puccetti.
Med. Lavoro 58, 223-227 (March, 1967). (In English).

The incidence of asbestos bodies in the lung of adult inhabitants of Milan was studied by lung smears obtained at autopsy, following the same technique used by Thomson and by Cauna et al. None of the individuals studied had been occupationally exposed to asbestos. Asbestos bodies were found in 51 out of 100 subjects studied. The incidences observed were 54% for men and 44% for women. Positive cases were more frequent in the oldest group of subjects and in those