

INVESTIGATION OF OCCUPATIONAL DERMATOSES IN THE CITRUS FRUIT CANNING INDUSTRY

DONALD J. BIRMINGHAM, M.D.

PAUL C. CAMPBELL Jr., M.D.

HENRY N. DOYLE, B.S.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

AND

J. M. McDONALD, M.D.

JACKSONVILLE, FLA.

DURING January 1947 the Division of Industrial Hygiene, United States Public Health Service, in cooperation with the Division of Industrial Hygiene of the Florida State Board of Health, conducted a survey of the Florida citrus fruit-canning industry to determine the incidence, the causes and the means of preventing occupational skin disease among the workers in that industry.

Of the 54 plants engaged in citrus fruit canning in Florida, 11 typical plants cooperated in the study. These plants represented an adequate cross section of the industry's activities, since all canning operations related to the processing of grapefruit, oranges and tangerines were observed. The group of 11 plants included two fresh fruit-packing houses.

Approximately 3,000 people were employed in the 11 plants, and of this number 2,500 were exposed to contact with citrus fruit juices and oils. A few more than one half of those exposed were examined for occupational skin disease.

The canning operations were subjected to particular study, because they continue to be the main source of cases of occupational skin disease in the citrus industry. Very little, if any, dermatitis occurs among those employed in the packing of fresh fruit.

It may also be noted that dermatitis is known to occur among those workers who fertilize the citrus groves, those who spray the trees with insecticides and those who pick the fruit. Such observations were published in 1938 by Schwartz,¹ of the United States Public Health Service. Other published reports on this subject

Dr. Campbell, Dr. Birmingham and Mr. Henry N. Doyle are senior surgeon, surgeon and senior sanitary engineer in the Division of Industrial Hygiene, United States Public Health Service, Federal Security Agency, Washington, D. C. Dr. J. M. McDonald is associated with the Florida State Board of Health.

1. Schwartz, L.: Cutaneous Hazards in the Citrus Fruit Industry: Brief History of Citrus Fruit in Florida and in California, Arch. Dermat. & Syph. **37**:631 (April) 1938.