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Enemies In The Dust



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Occupational Respiratory Diseases

Nine articles reprinted from the

BULLETIN of the AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION

PNEUMOCONIOSIS IS A TERM as broad as it is long. It covers a multitude of respiratory diseases with a common denominator: The source of each one can be traced to the occupation of its victim—whether he (rarely is an Ms. afflicted) be a coal miner, a gold miner, a foundryman, a stone cutter, a farmer, or a cotton mill worker.

The pneumoconioses are byproducts of an industrialized society. They are sometimes called dust diseases because dusts of minuscule size emanating from materials handled in certain occupations are inhaled and accumulate in the worker's lung. Eventually, if exposure to sufficiently high concentrations of dust continues, the accumulated particles cause fibrosis, or scarring, of lung tissue, with consequent reduction in lung function and, frequently, permanent disability.

Originally the term pneumoconiosis (from the Greek "pneumo," meaning lung, and "konis," meaning dust) was applied to exposures to all types of dusts. Today, however, the term has been limited to include only the results of breathing dusts that give rise to chronic effects. (More)

Respiratory diseases are the most serious health problem of all occupational diseases. The first section, starting above, gives an overview of the problem. Subsequent sections include brief accounts of the individual diseases and ideas on what needs to be done.

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