

REPORT OF THE PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS
EXAMINATIONS OF ASBESTOS WORKERS IN Asbestos
AND THETFORD MINES, QUEBEC

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The Asbestos and Thetford groups are very dissimilar with respect to age distribution and length of service in the asbestos industry, but racially and economically the two groups are much alike.

Table I gives the age distribution of the men and Table II the distribution according to length of service in the asbestos industry.

REPORT OF THE PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS AND
EXAMINATIONS OF A.S.T.C. MEN IN
AND THETFORD MINES, QUEBEC.

The report herewith presented deals with the examination of 141 employees of the Canadian Johns-Manville Co., Asbestos, Que. and 54 employees of the Asbestos Corporation of Canada, the Hoarby-Mattison Co. and the Asbestos Mine, all of Thetford Mines, Que. 40 of the men of the Canadian Johns-Manville Co. were examined by Dr. H. H. Stevenson and Dr. Joseph Hyatt, who performed the physical examinations and X-ray examinations respectively. The other examinations were all performed by me, except the X-ray examinations. Actually, Drs. Stevenson and Hyatt examined 57 men; but since 17 of these men were re-examined by me I am including them in my list. Drs. Stevenson and Hyatt carried on their work in November 1929. The physical examinations were done in July 1930 in Asbestos, and in September 1930 in Thetford Mines.

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REPORT OF THE PHYSICIAN WHO MADE THE
EXAMINATIONS IN A.M.T.C. DIVISION IN
1929, 1930 AND 1931, 1932.

The report herewith presented deals with the examination of 141 employees of the Canadian Johns-Manville Co., Asbestos, Que. and 54 employees of the Asbestos Corporation of Canada, the Hoadly-Hutton Co. and the Asbestos Mine, all of Thetford Mines, Que. 40 of the men of the Canadian Johns-Manville Co. were examined by Dr. W. H. Stevenson and Dr. Joseph Pratt, who performed the physical examinations and X-ray examinations respectively. The other examinations were all performed by me, except the X-ray examinations. Actually, Drs. Stevenson and Pratt examined 57 men; but since 17 of these men were re-examined by me I am including them in my list. Drs. Stevenson and Pratt carried on their work in November 1929. The examinations were done in July 1930 in Asbestos, and in September 1930 in Thetford Mines.

The Asbestos and Thetford groups are very dissimilar with respect to age distribution and length of service in the asbestos industry, but racially and economically the two groups are much alike.

Table I gives the age distribution of the men, and Table II the distribution according to length of service in the asbestos industry.

TABLE 1.

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF ASBESTOS WORKERS				
	Asbestos		Thetford Mines	
AGE GROUP	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
15 - 19	3	2.1		
20 - 24	21	17.0	2	7.7
25 - 29	24	17.0	5	9.5
30 - 34	26	18.5	6	11.1
35 - 39	25	17.7	4	7.4
40 - 44	18	12.8	15	27.1
45 - 49	14	10.0	7	13.0
50 - 54	3	2.1	6	11.1
55 - 59	1	0.7	4	7.4
60 - 64	1	0.7	6	11.1
65 - 69	1	0.7	1	1.9
70 and over	1	0.7		
TOTAL	141	100.00	54	100.0

T A B L E I I

LENGTH OF SERVICE IN ASBESTOS INDUSTRY				
Years of Service.	Asbestos		Thetford Mines	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
0 - 4	44	31.2	1	1.85
5 - 9	65	46.1	8	14.8
10 - 14	11	7.8	6	11.1
15 - 19	10	7.1	16	29.6
20 - 24	6	4.3	9	16.7
25 - 29	2	1.4	9	16.7
30 - 34	2	1.4	1	1.85
35 - 39	1	.7		
40 - 44			2	3.7
O T A L	141	100.0	54	100.0

It will be noted that while 68 percent of the men in Thetford Mines were over 40 years of age only 28 percent of the men in Asbestos were over 40. And further with respect to length of service 63.4 percent of the men examined in Thetford Mines had worked in the asbestos industry for 10 years or more, but in Asbestos only 22 percent had worked for more than ten years.

Table III shows the disposition of the men in various parts of the industry. Since the numbers are

small broad occupational categories are used. In Asbestos the occupations are divided into 3 groups - mill, pit and factory; in Thetford Mines only the first two occupational groups are used, since no asbestos manufacturing is carried on there. All the men of the Thetford Mines group could be so classified, but 5 men were excluded from the Asbestos group since they did not appear to be exposed to an unusual amount of dust.

T A B L E III

LENGTH OF SERVICE IN DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONS IN ASBESTOS INDUSTRY

Years of service	ASBESTOS			THETFORD MINES	
	Mill	Drilling pit	Factory	Mill	Drilling pit
0-4	14	7	24	1	
5-9	36	8	16	3	5
10-14	6	6		7	1
15-19	7	3		12	4
20-24	3	1		6	1
25-29	1	1		6	1
30-34	1	1		1	
35-39	1				
40-44					2
TOTAL	69	27	40	40	14

The past occupational history in industries other than the asbestos industry was significant only in 5 cases. Of these one had been a grain inspector

6 years and so exposed to very dusty conditions, one had been an underground copper miner for 18 years, one a copper miner for 2 years, a fourth had worked in a cement plant for 9 years, and the fifth had operated a drill in an iron mine. This last individual showed X-ray evidence of pneumoconiosis, the others did not have pneumoconiosis.

In Table IV are given observations of weight in relation to height by age. The average weights are taken from the figures compiled by the Association of Life Insurance Medical Directors and the Actuarial Society of America.

T A B L E IV.

WEIGHTS AND HEIGHTS ACCORDING TO AGE

	Pounds Under average				Pounds over average			
	20-29	10-19	5-9	-4 to +4	5-9	10-19	20-29	
WHITE MALE	No. 21	23	19	24	16	19	9	100
	15.6	20.0	15.6	17.1	11.4	15.6	6.4	100
WHITE FEMALE	No. 9	11	8	9	8	6	7	100
	16.7	20.4	14.8	16.7	5.6	11.1	12.9	100
10,000 male industrial workers	15	10	11	21	9	14	10	100

The group of 10,000 male industrial workers referred to in the above table was studied by the United States Public Health Service (see Public Health Bulletin

No. 162). It will be noted that there is very little distinction between this large group and the group of asbestos workers so far as degrees of overweight or underweight are concerned.

In the consideration of individual defects some interesting facts have been found. In this study only the 101 men at Asbestos and the 54 men at Thetford Mines are considered, since the records of the men examined by Dr. Stevenson are not strictly comparable with mine.

TEETH:-

Dividing the men into two groups according to whether the teeth did or did not need attention, of the Asbestos group 49.5% required attention, and of the Thetford Mines group 51.8 %.

HEARING:-

Acuity of hearing was tested by means of a watch. (My own hearing, which has been tested by an audiometer, was considered normal, and used as a standard) The watch test is admittedly very rough. In noisy occupations impaired hearing is frequently found in the older employees. Of the 101 men at Asbestos 10 showed definite hearing loss. This is not an excess proportion since an

group of adults will show a similar picture. In Thetford Mines 28 of the 54 men suffered from well marked hearing loss. This is a very high percentage, and comparable to what may be found in weaving sheds and boiler shops. All these men, except two, had been exposed to loud noise in their work for 10 years or more, and it is reasonable to suppose that noise played a part in their hearing disability.

The number of men with infected TONSILS was 27 in Asbestos and 13 in Thetford Mines, and almost identical ratio to the total in both groups.

Defects of the THYROID were rare. 4 men in Asbestos and 1 in Thetford Mines had enlarged thyroids.

BLOOD PRESSURE:-

Readings were recorded in all men over 40 years of age. Except in exceptional circumstances the blood pressure was not taken in the younger men. Consequently although the groups examined in Thetford Mines was smaller than that in Asbestos more blood pressure readings were taken there. 2 men in Asbestos had blood pressures of over 150 and 2 blood pressures under 100 m.m. of mercury. 8 men in Thetford Mines had blood pressures of over 150 and 2 blood pressures under 100.

The incidence of HERNIA is of interest from the compensation standpoint. In Asbestos all new employees must pass a physical examination before employment. There were 4 cases of inguinal hernia discovered among the 101 men examined there. In addition to these 5 men had been operated upon for this condition.

In Thetford Mines physical examination is not required before employment. There were 5 cases of inguinal hernia among the 54 men examined and 2 cases which had been operated upon.

Some interest has arisen in connection with the occurrence of the so-called ASBESTOS CORNS. These are usually pin head sized elevations of the skin, somewhat like minute warts. None of these were detected in the Asbestos men probably due to my ignorance of their appearance. 8 of the Thetford Mines men had these growths on their hands and several others reported having had them at one time or another.

L U N G S

Of the 101 men examined by me at Asbeston only 4 suffered from definite first stage pneumoconiosis. There will not be considered on account of the doubtful diagnosis.

Of the 40 men examined by Drs. Stevenson and Wyatt 14 were diagnosed as first stage pneumoconiosis (asbestosis 1) (I am including the 17 men examined by Drs. Stevenson and Wyatt and subsequently re-examined by me in my group of 101). The much lesser incidence of pneumoconiosis in my group of men may seem surprising, but it must be remembered that the X-ray negatives were not read by the same men. In my group the X-ray diagnoses were made by Dr. Merimother of Pitcher, Oklahoma, and in the other group the interpretations were by Drs. Wyatt and ^{Marinelly} ~~Marinelly~~. Further the ~~group~~ ^{men} examined by Drs. Stevenson and Wyatt were, in general, older than those in my group.

Of the 54 men examined at Thorford Mine 24 were diagnosed by X-ray as suffering from pneumoconiosis (asbestosis), of these 4 were diagnosed as probably first stage asbestosis, 8 as early stage, 9 as definite first stage and 3 as second stage.

The pertinent facts regarding the definite cases of asbestosis are given in tables V and VI.

Table VI

No.	Age	Occupational History	Symptoms	Signs
Thetford Union Group				
1	A.1	filling bags 4 years oilor 12 years foreman 4 years	no symptoms	coarse crackles above heart & at both bases behind.
2	A.1	driller 23 years	no symptoms	no abnormal signs
3	A.1	cleaner in mill 3 yrs. (probably)	dyspnea	no abnormal signs
4	A.1	filling bags 4 yrs.		
5	A.1	millwright 27 years	dyspnea	no abnormal signs
6	A.2	sweeper 11 years (early)	cough, ex- acerbation, Dec, blood in sputum, loss of weight	coarse crackles left base behind
7	A.1	millwright 21 years	cough, ex- acerbation, dyspnea, loss of weight & strength	dry rales over rt. chest behind, expansion deficient
8	A.1	millwright 21 years (probably)	cough	occasional dry rales at left base
9	A.1	driller 11 years	no symptoms	no abnormal signs
10	A.1	driller 17 years (early)	history of pleurisy, sister died of t.b.c.	no abnormal signs
11	A.1	millwright 16 years (early)	dyspnea	no abnormal signs
12	A.1	driller 40 years (early)	No symptoms	very coarse crackles right base.
13	A.1	driller 6 years (early)	No symptoms	no abnormal signs
14	A.1	general work in pit 4 years		
15	A.1	filling bags 1 year last coal 1 year	history of hemoptysis	no abnormal signs
16	A.1	in mill 3 years (early)	cough, dyspnea, moderate t.b.c. in l. l.	no abnormal signs
17	A.1	in tunnel feeding crusher 3 years		
18	A.1	crusher 11 years (early)	no symptoms	no abnormal signs
19	A.1	sweeper in mill 4 yrs. oilor in mill 3 years		
20	A.1	loading boxes in pit 27 years, feeding the mill 3 years	distorted & of t.b.c. 10%	showing of fine crackles both lungs behind from vertebra down; expansion note diminished
21	A.1	millwright 24 years (early)	dyspnea	no abnormal signs
22	A.1	foreman 20 years		
23	A.1	feeding crusher 10 year cleaning in mill 15 yrs.	dyspnea	crackles in rt. axilla & l. base behind,
24	A.1	feeding crusher in mill (probably)	no symptoms	no abnormal signs
25	A.1	6 years, driver 1 year, foreman in mill 3 years		

Table VI (continued)

No.	Diagnosis	Age	Occupational history	Symptoms	Signs
Thetford Mill Group (cont'd)					
65	A.s. (early)	35	loading boxes in pit 7 yrs., driller 6 yrs.	no symptoms	no abnormal signs.
71	A.s. (probably)	31	operator in mill 1 yrs., millwright 10 years	no symptoms	hyperinflation seen on chest over right lung, hyperinflation over right side of chest, over left upper lobe front view.
73	A.s.	37	oilier in mill 10 yrs. Foreman mill 7 yrs.	non fatal t.b.C. daughter has tuberculosis.	expansion poor, hyperinflation 1.5 cm in R. axilla, hyperinflation 2.0 cm over left lower chest.
75	A.s.	41	mill repairs 10 yrs. mill foreman 10 yrs.	cough, dyspnea	expansion poor, hyperinflation poor at all levels, no relief.
77	A.s. (late)	45	Foreman mill 15 yrs. millwright 7 yrs.	no symptoms	no abnormal signs.

It will be noted that of the 111 men examined at Andover 17 were diagnosed as first stage asbestosis, while of the 51 examined at Trestford 11 were diagnosed as first stage asbestosis and 3 as second stage asbestosis. This is not to be interpreted as indicating an excess hazard in Trestford Mines. The increased incidence of pneumoconiosis in Trestford Mines is simply a reflection of the different distribution with respect to age and length of service. Reference to tables 1 and 2 will recall the great differences in these two things.

In the great majority of cases the length of service in dusty work was more than 5 years as indicated in the following table:

Length of service	Number of cases	Number of men examined.
0 - 4 yrs.	2	22
5 - 9	5	73
10 - 14	7	13
15 & over	13	22
Total	27	110

From this table one would conclude that asbestosis is not likely to develop with an exposure of less than 5 years, but that with exposures of more than 15 years there is a great possibility of it developing. It is, however, of interest to remember that many men with long periods of exposure do not develop any signs of asbestosis.

As to occupations of 41 drillers 11 were cases of asbestosis, of 1 mill workers 17 were cases of asbestosis and of 40 workers in the factory only 1 case showed x-ray evidence of the disease. Evidently there is little difference in the hazard in mill workers and drillers. The mill workers appear to be exposed to far greater dust concentrations than the drillers and it is rather difficult to understand the high incidence of asbestosis among the drillers. However, it may or may not be of interest to note that

that the drillers are occasionally exposed to granite dust.

None of the cases of ankylosis appeared to suffer from disabling symptoms. Perhaps the most ^{common} symptom was shortness of breath, but less than half the cases complained of this symptom (11 of the 21 cases).

As to clinical signs I was unable to find any, although signs ^{would enable} which would enable one to make a diagnosis in the absence of the x-ray

picture. Inspection of the lungs was of little value since it was difficult to evaluate the degree of diaphragmatic excursion and chest expansion, a error to be deficient when actually it was not. The free inspiration test was not available since quantitative idea of vital capacity is not easily attained; the measurement of chest expansion is not accurate and given up after the first few examinations.

Since there is not a great deal of percussion over the chest, intensity of tactile fremitus or vocal resonance could not be compared on one side of the chest with the other to detect abnormalities. The only abnormality is essentially a symmetrical lesion and in this disease the examination of the sides of the chest is of little help. The only observations apply to the quality of the breath sounds.

The most frequently found abnormality was the presence of rales, particularly crepitant rales. In many of the more severe cases crepitant rales occurred throughout both sides of the chest, particularly on coughing, but in two of the three cases of recent onset crepitant rales were not heard, so that evidently ^{these} these are not a constant finding. On clinical examination two or three of the cases had large numbers of crepitant rales at the base were thought to be tuberculous but the x-ray examination did not confirm this impression.

Tuberculosis did not play an important part in the study. None of the cases of ankylosis appeared to be complicated with this disease. Indeed the incidence of definite tuberculosis in the two groups of 127 individuals was very low. There were several suspected cases on clinical examination which were not confirmed by x-ray and several suspected cases by x-ray which showed no real evidence in the way of signs and symptoms. Only one case in the group can be considered as actively tuberculous.

It was difficult to obtain sputum from most of the men since very few of them were coughing. About 12 sputa were examined for tubercle bacilli and ankylosing bodies. No tubercle bacilli were found but one case did show ankylosing bodies. This case was diagnosed by x-ray as ankylosing ankylosis (first stage) but is not included in the number of ankylosing cases since the x-ray film was not satisfactory.

Conversation with physicians and other workers in the asbestos region indicated that no hazard to health was suggested in connection with work in the asbestos mining and milling industry.

In general it may be said that the ^{hazard} of ^{pneumoconiosis} ~~ankylosing ankylosis~~ in the asbestos mining and milling industry has been demonstrated, but evidently the disease does not incapacitate to any great degree and apparently it is not particularly associated with tuberculosis.

Paul G. Peck
1930