

DRAFT

EXPOSURE TO ASBESTOS DUST

(Continued)

Naturalist, Pliny the Elder, each mentioned a sickness of the lungs in slaves whose occupation was to weave asbestos into cloth. The cloth at that time was used in cremation and was described as the "funeral dress of kings". Very little constructive medical information was obtained or pursued about asbestosis following this. The modern knowledge of asbestosis dates to about 1900 when Dr. H. Montague Murray of London described the fibrosis of asbestosis in the lungs of a man who had worked in the carding room of a factory for 14 years. A few years later, an inspector in the Department of Labor of England, described the illness in a group of employees in an asbestos weaving mill. This was the first report of the epidemiology of asbestosis. Unfortunately, neither he nor Dr. Murray realized the full significance of their findings. The first written report of the illness in the modern medical literature was in 1924, when Dr. W. E. Cooke, an English physician, described a case in a woman who developed symptoms after working for 13 years in an asbestos textile mill. He was also first to describe the difference between asbestosis and other pneumoconioses.

Between 1928 and 1929, Dr. E.R.A. Merewether examined 363 asbestos-textile workers and found that slightly more than 25% showed evidence of pulmonary fibrosis with symptoms.