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Conference on Pneumoconiosis -

The first meeting of the Program Committee for the Governor's Conference on Pneumoconiosis was held on April 20. Preliminary plans for the Conference, which is to be held in the Fall, were discussed and program suggestions were made. Members of the Committee are: C. L. Wilbar, Jr., M. D., Secretary of Health; Martin H. Brackbill, Budget Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Administration; William P. Young, Secretary of Labor and Industry; H. B. Charnbury, Secretary of Mines & Mineral Industries; James A. Reichley, Governor's Legislative Secretary; Jan Lieben, M. D., Director, Division of Occupational Health; Mario Battigelli, M. D., Assistant Professor of Occupational Health, University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health; Merle Bundy, M. D., Medical Director, U. S. Steel Corporation; Leslie A. Falk, M. D., Area Medical Administrator, United Mine Workers of America Welfare & Retirement Fund; Earl Lamb, Moffatt Coal Company; Paul Moomaw, Anthracite Institute; John S. Packard, M. D., President, Pennsylvania Tuberculosis & Health Society; Eugene P. Pendergrass, M. D., Department of Radiology, University of Pennsylvania Hospital; Gordon S. Siegel, M. D., Chief, Employee Health Programs Section, Division of Occupational Health, U. S. Public Health Service; and Joseph Yablonski, United Mine Workers of America, District #5.

Lead Hazard in Demolition Work -

Lead continues to be a perennial hazard in industrial operations as it has been since ancient times. A recent incident investigated by the Division bears this out.

Several cases of lead poisoning were reported involving employees of a demolition company engaged in razing hammerhead cranes at a defunct waterfront pier. Investigation by one of the Division's physicians disclosed the fact that five of the ten men performing the work had been hospitalized with lead poisoning. It was determined that the work was done by steeplejacks and consisted of burning off sections of the lead-painted steel structures and lowering them to the ground. No respiratory protection was afforded the workmen. The site of operations on the crane was at a height of approximately 150 feet so that collection of breathing zone samples was neither practical nor safe. (We have no steeplejack industrial hygienists.)

The proprietor of the firm was visited and methods to be used for keeping the employees' lead exposure to a minimum were explained. He readily agreed to conform to all of the control measures recommended which included those for respiratory protection and periodic urinalyses for determination of lead absorption. The fact that the proprietor seemed amazed to learn of the harmful properties of lead points up the need for continued and constant vigilance and education in the field of occupational health. This is particularly true in the case of those industries, such as demolition work, whose operations have no fixed locale and involve moving from location to location as job contracts are received. Moreover, the labor force for such types of work is generally recruited on a job-to-job basis, with few workmen regularly employed by firms contracting for such work.

Health Conference -

The 13th Annual Health Conference will be held at the Pennsylvania State University, University Park, August 16-20. The general theme of this year's conference will be "Men, Methods and Materials". Sponsoring agencies, with the Pennsylvania Department of Health, are the Pennsylvania Health Council, the Pennsylvania Medical Society and the Pennsylvania Public Health Association. Sessions will encompass a wide variety of subjects pertinent to the public health field. Of particular interest to occupational health workers will be a panel devoted to the "Philosophy of Air and Water Standards" in

which outstanding speakers will discuss "American and Russian Threshold Limit Values", "Ambient Air Quality (Air Pollution) Standards" and "Drinking Water Standards". A special session will be concerned with "Pesticides" and a question-and-answer "curbstone conference" is scheduled on "Radioactive Fallout". You should plan to attend.

Advisory Committee -

The Advisory Committee to Establish Short-Term Limits of Exposure to Airborne Contaminants met on May 22. Limits for 38 substances have now been approved and a definition of a short-term limit has been formulated. The Advisory Health Board will consider these proposed changes and additions to Article 432 during their August meeting.

Noise -

The Hygienic Information Guide included with this issue is on the subject of Noise. Hearing loss may be caused by a variety of conditions but that resulting from exposure to industrial noise is of particular concern, inasmuch as Pennsylvania, like many other states, is contemplating the adoption of legislation which would place industrially induced hearing loss in the category of compensable diseases.

Self-Service Hazards -

Although the Division has prepared and distributed a "Guide for Proper Operation of Coin-Operated Dry Cleaning Establishments", the procedures recommended in the publication are not always adhered to, as the following incident illustrates. Two women had cleaned three loads of heavy material such as blankets and coats at a neighborhood coin-operated dry cleaning establishment. The machine utilized had a relatively short cleaning cycle of 37 minutes as compared to the usual cycle of one hour. Perchloroethylene was the solvent used.

The women spent approximately 20 minutes in the establishment, then hung the cleaned garments in their automobile and drove home, about a quarter of a mile distant. They were concerned over the possibility of not reaching home because they felt "quite intoxicated, dizzy and light-headed, had a stiff tongue, were hoarse and were becoming hysterical". The clothing was hung in one room of the home and soon the entire house became permeated with perchloroethylene vapor. As the family was having guests for the evening, they were quite concerned with the odor and consequently moved the articles to the garage where they remained for six days until the odor disappeared.

The industrial hygienist determined that only two of the five installed dry cleaning machines were actually functioning at the time of this incident - the others didn't work. All were designed to be operated by the customer and no employee of the establishment was on duty at the time. None of the machines were equipped with interlocks and could, therefore, be opened during the cleaning cycle.

Fortunately, no serious consequences resulted from the incident described, but the necessity for adherence to accepted safe practices in the operation of self-service dry cleaning equipment is made readily apparent.

AMA - San Francisco -

Jan Lieben, M. D., Director of the Division of Occupational Health, presented a paper entitled "The Course of Pneumoconiosis" at the recent meeting of the American Medical Association held in San Francisco. Co-authors with Dr. Lieben were Drs. Eugene P. Pendergrass, Department of Radiology, University of Pennsylvania Hospital and Heinrich Brieger, Professor of Occupational Medicine, Jefferson Medical College of Philadelphia. The paper described their study of the progress of pneumoconiosis in 2 groups of coal miners and former coal miners by comparisons of chest X-rays taken over a period of years between "first X-ray" and "latest X-ray". The question is whether progression of pneumoconiosis, once established, is influenced by further dust exposure. The study of 130 paired X-rays, taken 7 to 15 years apart, reveals that there is no definite answer to this question and that each case should be judged individually.

Hypersensitivity to Chlordane -

Over the past few years, the Division has received complaints from individual who have become ill after their homes were treated for termites. In all cases the home were treated with chlordane, an insecticide ingredient used by professional exterminators.

companies. The chemical is usually mixed with an oil base for spraying or brushing onto baseboards and beams. A water solution is used in treating the soil around the houses.

The investigations showed a general pattern. A few days after a house was treated, one or two adult members of the household would experience dryness of the throat, headache, nausea, dizziness, muscle pains, and irritability. The conditions would become progressively worse, requiring medical attention and even hospitalization. The individuals would recover when away from their houses for a day or two but became ill again on returning.

Air samples were collected in all the homes. Concentrations ranged from none detected to one milligram per cubic meter of air. Apparently, highly susceptible individuals can be affected even when the chlordane concentrations are less than that which can be detected by instrumentation.

The threshold limit value for chlordane is 0.5 milligrams per cubic meter of air. However, this is an industrial standard which applies to a weighted average exposure over an eight-hour day for healthy adults. It is not directly applicable to a home situation where exposures would be more than eight hours and in which the exposed could be children, aged, and others with reduced vital capacities.

The Division reported its findings to the complainants and recommended that the chlordane be removed either by neutralization or by scrubbing with detergents.

Conferences -

Members of the Division's medical staff attended the Industrial Health Conference, in Pittsburgh, and medical and technical personnel attended the American Industrial Hygiene Conference, in Philadelphia. Both of these meetings were held during April. At the Philadelphia meeting the Division presented a display of industrial hygiene instruments at least twenty-five years old in commemoration of the silver anniversary of the American Industrial Hygiene Association.

Decontamination Procedure -

A radium-contaminated dwelling in Lansdowne is in the process of decontamination by the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the U. S. Public Health Service. The dwelling, half of a duplex stucco-frame house, became contaminated in the 1920's and 1930's when a physics professor used the basement to process radium. The other half of the house is not contaminated.

The Division of Occupational Health had made a check of all Pennsylvania radium firms who operated during the past 50 years and it was during this survey that it was discovered that the Lansdowne home had once been used as a place to process radium.

When health physicists checked the cellar of the house where the professor, who died many years ago, had processed radium, radiation levels considered high under presently accepted standards were found. The level in the basement, which was used only for storage, ranged from 1 to 5 millirems per hour. The average level of background radiation is .02 to .05 millirems per hour.

In the decontamination procedure, the Pennsylvania Department of Health is furnishing the personnel, while the U. S. Public Health Service supplies consultation and equipment. Special protective clothing as well as supplied air respirators are worn to avoid unnecessary exposure. Scrubbing and vacuum equipment are also used. Some furniture, tools and household items have been removed from the basement for disposal at a site outside of Pennsylvania.

The State Health Department and the USPHS will utilize experience gained in decontamination of the house to prepare a manual on decontamination procedures which will be helpful to other health departments faced with similar decontamination problems.

International Trade Fair -

One of the Division's industrial hygienists, Henry J. Surovics, assisted the U. S. Department of Labor at the International Trade Fair held in Poznan, Poland during the period of June 7 to June 21. Hank participated in manning an industrial safety exhibit presented by the Labor Department. He was selected for this assignment because of his Polish-speaking ability and his background in industrial hygiene.

Personnel Notes -

John A. Dattoli, M. D., has resigned as Chief, Plant Health Services Section,

to accept the position of Chief, Bureau of Special Services, in the District of Columbia Department of Public Health. This bureau is comprised of the Divisions of Occupational and Employee Health Services, Accident Prevention, Nutritional Services, Clinical Social Services and Health Mobilization. Dr. Dattoli has been with the Pennsylvania Department of Health since April 1960. - Shiro Tanaka, M. D., has been promoted from Public Health Physician Trainee to Industrial Hygiene Physician. - Ronald H. Boyer has been promoted from Chemist II to Chemist III and is in charge of the laboratory. - Three industrial hygienists have returned to duty after graduate study, having received Masters Degrees with specialty in industrial hygiene: P. G. Rentos, University of Michigan; R. T. Richards, University of Pittsburgh; and E. R. Ebersole, University of North Carolina. - Harry J. Pistawka, M. D., has been appointed Public Health Research Physician and will work on the Division's pneumoconiosis prevention program.

Occupational Health Nursing -

We are pleased to announce that the Trane Company, Dunmore, has established an employee health service. Miss Lillian Giovanelli, R.N., is the occupational health nurse. Fisher Electronics in Milroy has also established such a service with Mrs. Patricia Paden, R.N., as occupational health nurse. We welcome Lillian and Patricia warmly to occupational health nursing.

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Recently we were privileged to visit the new plant of Winthrop Laboratories in Myerstown, Lebanon County. This plant is so modern that it provides a fall-out shelter! The health service department can be considered a model. The furnishings are not only all that one would wish in terms of beauty, but they are extremely functional. Mr. Donald Shepherd, the executive vice-president, Mr. William Means, personnel director, and Miss Mary Tice, the occupational health nurse, will welcome any of you who care to visit.

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The following is an excerpt from Industrial Nursing in the United States, An Interview with Mary Louise Brown, R.N., Chief, Occupational Health Nursing Section, Division of Occupational Health, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, which appeared in the January 1964 issue of Industrial Medicine and Surgery.

Interviewer: What do you consider to be the most critical problem in occupational health nursing, and how do you propose to solve it?

Miss Brown: The most critical problem is the limited demand for expert occupational health nursing consultation services and the very limited supply of prepared nurses to give occupational health nursing consultation. In order to solve this, nurses and others including industrial management and occupational health physicians must learn to expect help from occupational health nurse consultants and to request these services.

Few nurses have had the opportunity to work with a consultant and few know how to use her skills. They see her as a nurse supervisor rather than as a consultant, one who can help them identify the problem, find resources and plan to use them. The occupational nurse and the occupational health physician need to remember that it is their responsibility to accept or reject the plan that is made. The consultant has no authority. She is a facilitator.

The upgrading of occupational health nursing practice depends upon the availability of nurse consultants who have the know-how to give expert occupational health nursing consultation. Job descriptions that outline a truly consultant role and channel of communication that permit effective working must be established. Most important of all, the nurses employed to give expert occupational health nursing consultation must be mature, well-adjusted persons who have acquired both nursing consultation skills and the depth of understanding that permits them to give expert occupational health nursing consultation. Those who work in occupational health programs and those who are about to begin a program should expect help from the nurse consultant and they should ask for it. Supply and demand are interrelated here as they are in business.