

That Is Not a Yesterday's Problem

In 1775, Sir Percivall Pott (1714-1788), an English surgeon reporting a higher frequency of scrotal cancer in young chimney sweepers, was the first who demonstrated that a neoplasm may be caused by exposure to an environmental factor.¹ This finding soon led to the identification of one of the first chemical carcinogens—polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.

Nowadays, many workers have continuous contact with carcinogens in their workplace or environment. It is believed that at least one in every ten cancers is the result of preventable, predictable workplace exposures.² Today's exposures, however, cause cancers at least two decades later—no alarm bells. The important point is that these cancers are preventable. You have two choices to make: to help prevent these cancers and reduce mortality through disseminating information and increased awareness of the important workplace and environmental exposures to carcinogens, or alternatively, overlook the problem, bury the bodies and let the killing continue. Unfortunately, the latter choice is the one chosen by some of the organizations, particularly some of those in developing countries. But, I believe, we have to choose the first option and help prevent diseases through disseminating information and increased awareness of important causative factors. Of course, eventually we will need to push for a regulatory response so that exposure to these carcinogens end or are limited.

In this issue of *The IJOEM*, we offer a review article on occupational causes of testicular cancer.³ Many diseases of the genitourinary system are caused by occupational or environmental exposures. The strongest link between chronic renal failure and occupational/environmental exposures has been demonstrated with metals such as lead, cadmium, chromium, copper and mercury. Other important occupational and environmental exposures include silica dust and organic solvents. In this issue of the journal, we also have a report on lead exposure and renal function.⁴ Previously, we published a review article on silica nephropathy.⁵ In this issue of *The IJOEM*, there is also a case report describing industrial injury to the genitourinary system.⁶

Although Sir Percivall Pott was the first to describe the relationship between cancer development and occupational exposures many years ago, that is not a yesterday's problem—it still goes on.

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References

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