

# Work in Brief

Dana Loomis, *Editor*

## Chronic lung disease and diesel exhaust

Diesel exhaust has been investigated as a possible occupational carcinogen, but there is also evidence from studies in environmental settings that exposure to similar combustion products may increase the risk of nonmalignant lung disease. Hart *et al*<sup>1</sup> report findings about the association of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and occupational diesel exposure in a large cohort of railway workers followed 1959–1996. Exposure was determined by job title and time of hire. For workers with potential exposure to train smoke who were hired after diesel power became common, mortality from COPD increased linearly at about 2.5% per year of employment, but there was no such relationship among workers hired when most trains were powered by steam.



## Cardiovascular mortality and exposure to traffic noise and air pollution

Beelen *et al*<sup>2</sup> report on the association of cardiovascular mortality with joint exposure to air pollution and noise. Both exposures have been identified as risk factors before, but despite common sources in road traffic, the effect of simultaneous exposure apparently had not been investigated. The authors modelled air pollutants, noise and traffic intensity at the homes of over 120,000 Dutch participants. All three factors were

associated with mortality from cardiovascular endpoints. The associations with pollution and traffic intensity remained after adjusting for noise but, interestingly, the association with noise was removed by adjustment for the other factors. The authors conclude that the association of cardiovascular endpoints with air pollution is not explained by noise. On the other hand, there may be evidence that air pollution explains the association of cardiovascular disease with traffic noise.



## Asthma and occupational exposure among nurses

Some research suggests that nursing personnel are at increased risk of developing adult-onset asthma, and in a study of Texas nurses Arif *et al*<sup>3</sup> investigate possible explanations. The authors classified exposure using a job-exposure matrix and found that, after adjustment for covariates, cleaning and disinfecting instruments and surfaces was associated with reported doctor-diagnosed asthma since entering nursing. Use of powdered latex



gloves before the year 2000, but not afterwards, was also associated with diagnosis of asthma.

## Elsewhere in the journal

Also this month, van den Berg *et al*<sup>4</sup> review the literature on factors contributing to the work ability index, Dragos and colleagues<sup>5</sup> report on immunological markers and symptoms in car painters exposed to diisocyanate, Suoyrjö *et al*<sup>6</sup> evaluate an intervention to reduce sickness absence and disability and Sorahan<sup>7</sup> presents findings on cancer among workers exposed to 2-mercaptobenzothiazole.



## REFERENCES

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*Occup Environ Med* 2009 66: i

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