Work in Brief

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Wood dust and Cancer

Wood dust is classified as a known human carcinogen on the basis of studies linking exposure and cancers of the nasal cavity and sinuses. Support for an association with other, more common, cancers is not as strong, but a new study by Jayaprakash et al.[1] may provide useful new evidence. The authors' large, hospital-based case-control study of cancers of the oral and nasal cavities, pharynx, larynx, trachea, lung and oesophagus among men found about a 30% increase in the risk of this combined group of aerodigestive and respiratory cancers among participants reporting exposure to wood dust. A larger excess risk of 69% was found for lung cancer, and the risk appeared to increase with the level of exposure. Indications of excess risk were also found for cancers of the nasal cavity and larynx, but for oesophageal cancer.

Markers of inflamation in Underground Railways

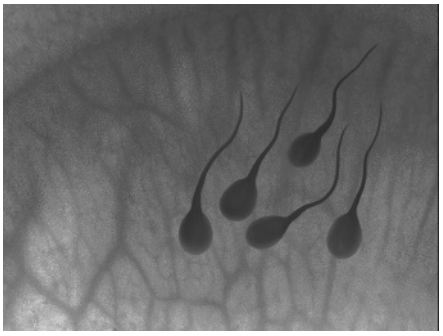
Analyses of the air in underground railways in several large cities show that underground workers and commuters can be exposed to high levels of respirable particles. Bigert *et al*.[2] investigated possible precursors of cardiovascular disease related to these exposures in a study of inflammatory markers in a sample of workers in the Stockholm underground. The authors found no change in any marker when participants returned to work for 2 days after 2 days off, but increased levels of some markers were seen in workers whose jobs had the highest potential for exposure. The absence of a short-term effect could be reassuring to underground commuters, but the authors suggest that workers might benefit if particle levels were reduced.

Glycol Ethers and Male Infertility

The influence of environmental contaminants on male fertility has generated a great deal of interest. To investigate the possible effects of workplace exposures, Cherry and colleagues[3] studied the association of occupational exposures to organic solvents and other agents with infertility among men attending fertility clinics. Exposure to glycol ethers estimated by hygienists emerged as the strongest risk factor among those examined, with odds ratios of 1.7 and 2.5 for moderate and high exposures. The authors conclude that exposure to glycol ethers in use around the beginning of the 21st century may have affected sperm motility.

Elsewhere in the Journal

Also this month, Revich and Shaposhnikov[4] report excess mortality during both hot and cold spells in Moscow, Mastrangelo et al.[5] report reduced risk of lung cancer among cotton mill workers potentially exposed to endotoxin and Ishigami and colleagues find evidence suggestive of a strong relationship between sulfur dioxide from volcanic eruptions and acute respiratory symptoms.



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