

Il rischio amianto nel settore tessile: indicazioni dal Registro Mesoteliomi Lombardia e definitiva conferma

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KEY WORDS

Mesothelioma; asbestos; textile workers

SUMMARY

«Asbestos risk in the textile industry: final confirmation of data from the Lombardy Mesothelioma Register».
Background: Cases of mesothelioma in non-asbestos textile workers have been frequently reported but the identification of asbestos dispersion sources in the workplaces has never been adequately performed. During 3 years of activity of the Mesothelioma Register for Lombardy, 40 cases (10.8% of all cases) were collected in textile workers engaged in all types of productive activities. The hypothesis that a significant asbestos risk for textile workers appeared not negligible. **Objectives:** The research was aimed at the identification of asbestos dispersion sources in textile factories. **Methods:** Specific information was collected by technicians, maintenance personnel and other experts and direct inspections were carried out in numerous workplaces that had not yet undergone significant changes with respect to the past. Also the industrial machinery utilised in the previous 40-50 years was thoroughly examined. **Results:** Epidemiological evaluation of the recorded cases showed a widespread distribution in the different phases of textile production. Inspections also showed that a large amount of asbestos had been regularly used applied to the ceilings and also to the walls of factories in order to avoid both condensation of steam and reflection of noise. In addition, asbestos had also been widely used to insulate water and steam pipes. The braking systems of most of the machines also had asbestos gaskets, and on several looms some brakes operated continuously in order to keep the warp in constant tension. **Conclusions:** Our observations confirmed that since production techniques in the textile industry required working in damp and warm conditions with the noise of the rapidly moving machines, asbestos was very often used because of its absorbent and soundproofing qualities and its resistance to friction. We demonstrated that asbestos was thus widely used in the industry and this certainly produced considerable fibre dispersions in the atmosphere of the workplaces. Asbestos risk must therefore be recognised for all those who have worked in the textile industry in the recent past and, as a result, cases of mesothelioma must be considered occupational diseases.