

Poster Presentation

14.4 THE HEALTH AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF WORKERS EXPOSED TO ASBESTOS IN A RIO DE JANEIRO TEXTILE FACTORY: ANALYSIS AND INTERVENTION

VANDA D'ACRI, HERMANO ALBUQUERQUE DE CASTRO,

MARIA BLANDINA MARQUES DOS SANTOS,

KATIA REIS DE SOUZA, CYRO HADDAD NOVELLO

Ministry of Health

Oswaldo Cruz Foundation

National School of Public Health (ENSP)

Workers' Health and Human Ecology Study Centre (CESTEH)

[Full Portuguese Text](#)

Abstract

This paper describes how CESTEHE reacted when a worker attending the Centre in 1995, and employed at a textile factory that uses asbestos, was found to have asbestosis.

CESTEHE interviewed 41 workers, 15 of whom were diagnosed as having asbestos. The paper makes a detailed presentation of the results of this research (analysis by gender, length of service, age, task etc). CESTEHE also found that the company refused to acknowledge the link between the disease and exposure to asbestos dust at its factory and that it operates a policy of regularly sacking staff who have been employed long enough to start displaying symptoms of disease.

CESTEHE organised a programme of collective discussions with the workers to explore together how the relations of production and the changing face of the economy (neoliberal policies, casualisation etc.) are affecting workers' health. The aim was to get the workers to go beyond an examination of their own individual state of health to analyse how they needed to work together if they were going to be able to change the working conditions that threatened their health. The authors discuss the need for research to have a participatory approach and to value workers' knowledge and experience as much as the input and theories of health professionals. This methodology is necessary to acquire the knowledge, improve the analysis and promote the solidarity and consciousness necessary to reverse current trends.

The paper also touches on how CESTEHE has sought to promote multidisciplinary information exchange and policy discussion at a regional, national (1997 seminar: controlled use or a ban on asbestos) and international level (1997 seminar on substitution).

English abstract written by Chris Whitehouse