

NIOSH TODAY

Marshall E. LaNier, MS

This is the first time in three years that I have participated actively in this program. Each time, knowing that the audience is made up largely of physicians, I wonder what I can discuss. Today I have selected two items, both of which are connected with information that I think will be of interest.

REGISTRY OF TOXIC EFFECTS OF CHEMICAL SUBSTANCES

Section 26 of the OSHAct states that NIOSH shall develop a toxic substance list and report on this to Congress. Some three or four years ago, we changed the name of the list to the Registry of Toxic Effects of Chemical Substances (RTECS). At present, there are some 38,000 substances on this list, including many reported in studies on carcinogenicity, teratogenicity and mutagenicity of various substances. We have continually tried to add some feature to the list each year to make it more valuable to researchers. During the past year we have added primary skin and eye irritation data done by the Draize method, as well as in vitro mutagenicity data from the Ames test. The Registry tracks fairly closely with the bioassay program of the National Cancer Institute in all testing phases of carcinogenicity; reports are filed whether the results be positive or negative. By and large, the Registry does not contain a lot of negative data. The International Agency for Research on Cancer monographs and their conclusions are also included. Roughly 3700 reviews are cited, with all of the citations to the original literature from which the data were taken. Generally, the originals are available in most university libraries; should there be a particular citation that is difficult to locate, you may contact us and we will provide it to you.

One feature of the Registry that users have found convenient is the cross-referencing of chemical names—there are roughly 95,000 cross-reference entries. Thus, a chemical can be found under its Chemical Abstract's nomenclature as well as by any of a number of common synonyms that are used in industry to identify the substance.

We have attempted to make the Registry available in as many formats as possible to foster its widest dissemination. For those who need the most up-to-date information, there is a microfilm update which is automatically mailed out to all Government Printing Office (GPO) subscribers of the paper copy for a fee of \$14/year. Two years ago, we put the computerized file on-line at the National Library of Medicine (NLM). I understand it was the second most used data base of the NLM during the last quarter; this makes us feel very good about the total system. Also, the National Institutes of Health, EPA, and Chemical Information System have RTECS on-line. I certainly hope that we can continue to make it one of the largest sources of toxic substance information in the world.

NIOSHTIC

Another system called NIOSHTIC (National Institute for Occupational Safety and

Health Technical Information Center) that I think will be of benefit to physicians is our bibliographic data base. Among the approximately 70,000 references are some of the health hazard evaluation reports (mentioned earlier by Dr. Robbins) that could be useful in specific businesses. This data base is unique, in that it is retrospective, going back to the early 1900's as well as being specific to occupational health. Thus, many medical reports of occupational disease, case histories, toxicological findings, methods of analysis, and other reports are indexed and are available to the interested researcher. The system is designed to allow free text search with a reasonably controllable vocabulary so that a limited number of articles germane to the subject desired can be accessed. Of interest to the occupational physician, are the extensive literature references contained in NIOSHTIC relative to specific industries.

Input from the International Labor Office (Geneva) is included in NIOSHTIC system. NIOSHTIC also contains citations from the CIS of the International Labor Organization, thus giving worldwide scope to the reports of occupational effects of chemicals, heat stress, noise, and other physical and chemical hazards which affect health in the workplace. At present, NIOSHTIC is not available to the public as is RTECS, but efforts are underway to accomplish this. Searches of NIOSHTIC are available through the Clearinghouse for Occupational Safety and Health Information, another service that my Division offers to the physician.

The Clearinghouse accepts questions of an occupational health nature from anyone and attempts to provide an answer in sufficient detail relative to meet the needs of the requestor. We encourage your questions, both specific and general. We will attempt to provide appropriate answers, references and information to facilitate your work. The Clearinghouse can be reached by calling: 513/684-8326 or by writing:

Clearinghouse for Occupational Safety and
Health Information
4676 Columbia Parkway
Cincinnati, Ohio 45226

The files I have described contain toxicity data and occupational health bibliographic references. This includes NIOSH Sampling and Analytical Procedures for Toxic Chemicals found in the workplace. Most of all of these methods are designed for personal air monitoring to determine exposure of individual workers. A research service through the Clearinghouse will not answer every question you might pose. We realize that much is yet to be discovered relative to the causes of occupational diseases and man's interaction with chemicals. NIOSH maintains constant contact with research centers in universities, industry, private groups and other governmental agencies in an effort to keep abreast of the continuing development of knowledge relative to occupational health and well-being. In addition to attempting to provide a sophisticated and well-founded information service to help you in your information needs, we solicit any information you may develop which could be of general value to the occupational health community. Any information that could be input to our data bases would be a benefit to all.

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