



বাংলাদেশ অকুপেশনাল সেইফটি, হেল্থ এন্ড এনভায়রনমেন্ট ফাউন্ডেশন (ওশি)

Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE)

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Asbestos Lung Disease Check-up Camps for Ship Breaking Workers in Bangladesh

Summary Findings

(Dhaka, Thursday, 02 February 2017): Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment (OSHE) foundation has conducted Asbestos Lung Disease Check-up camps for ship breaking workers at Sitakunda in Chittagong. The camps were held in 2 phases: July 26 - July 30, 2016 and 28-29 January, 2017.

Rank and file ship breaking workers and workers belonging to different unions, with more than 10 years exposure complaining of chest pain, breathlessness or malaise were called by OSHE staff to attend the medical check-up camps.

Some 101 workers who agreed to come for the medical check-up. OSHE staff were trained to take detailed occupational history under supervision of a senior doctor. A minimum of 30 minutes was required for completion of the history form. The supervision of form filling was done by Dr Shubro.

Staffing:

The team of 8 (5 doctors and 3 non-medical) was led by Dr. Muralidhar. The senior doctors were Dr Ahad and Dr Shubro, who are one of the top community health clinicians in the country. The other doctors are Dr Masumat, Dr Rashid and Dr Tapan. The non-medical staff were Laila Siddiqua, Saiful and Sazzad.

Results:

In total 101 workers were checked up, Asbestosis was diagnosed among 40. 6 patients had a disability due to asbestosis of more than 60%.



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Tests:

Pulmonary function testing and exercise pulse oximetry were done either by trained doctors or by non-medical technical staff under supervision. PFT was done a minimum of three times or until two readings are consistent. The best test was chosen based on visual observation of a good test along with the graph. 11% ethnic correction was done on the US prediction equation to calculate predicted values. Exercise pulse oximetry was done after 100 meter brisk walk.

Diagnostic criteria:

Asbestosis was diagnosed based on occupational history of a minimum of 10 year exposure to asbestos and ILO grading of 1/1 reticular opacities. A finding of deep inspiratory rales or ronchi and FVC < 80% of predicted was used for disability assessment.

Treatment:

It is planned to treat all cases of asbestosis by physiotherapy to improve the lung function using incentive spirometry and nebulisation once weekly. OSHE has purchased the machines and trained their staff to give this treatment. The improvement of lung function would be monitored monthly by pulmonary function tests. They were also counselled to stop smoking.

Report publication in peer reviewed medical journal:

Under the guidance of public health expert Dr Ahad and Dr Shubro, the data will be analysed for publication. This will be the first report in medical literature on asbestosis among ship breakers from a developing country and will add to sparse global data on this subject. This will take 6 months and is hoped that by July 2017 it will be complete



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Future Plan Suggestion:

- A. Once hard core medical evidence of asbestosis is published then other medical personal including doctors and nurses can be trained to diagnose this disease. One or two doctors can be sponsored to be a trained reader of ILO radiographs. He/ She will become an important asset for the country to diagnose interstitial lung diseases (Asbestosis and Silicosis).
- B. In the next 6 months OSHE trained doctors under the guidance of Dr Ahad and Dr Shubro will be able to diagnose cases of suspected asbestosis and occupational asthma and treat more workers from Sitakunda. These suspected cases will be confirmed by Dr Muralidhar.
- C. A dedicated occupational clinic would be requested to be set up by the government integrated in primary care based on OSHE model clinic for diagnosis and treatment of Asbestosis among ship breakers. Government staff including doctors and nurses can be trained by doctors Shubro, Ahad and Murali. The logistics for this training can be arranged by OSHE.
- D. OSHE should strengthen asbestos awareness among workers with demand for preventive work culture at yards levels, strengthen workers health services for workers at Ship Breaking sector and continue its campaign for Ban of Asbestos in Bangladesh together with its trade union partners, Asbestos victim networks health rights NGOs, CBOs and other relevant groups.

For more information, contact with:

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