
Physician's Perspective on Risk Communication for Beryllium Exposed Workers

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Abstract

Beryllium exposure, sensitization and disease present unique challenges for the treating physician. The exquisite susceptibility of some workers to even low-levels of exposure often makes designation of safe work zones difficult. Workers who recognize that the label, 'beryllium sensitized' may impact their livelihood, health insurance or future job prospects may be reluctant to participate in surveillance programs designed for early detection of beryllium sensitization and disease. Sensitized workers who do not feel ill may not wish to pursue diagnostic workups which are time consuming and not risk free. Finally employers may be tempted by the controversies surrounding exposure, testing and diagnosis to erect barriers to exposure controls, product substitution and surveillance. Training is important for physicians to increase knowledge of the workplace and processes, for employees and employers to understand the unique toxicological features of beryllium and for agencies responsible for illness prevention. All need to understand the pressure on workers pertaining to the above noted challenges.

Beryllium Sensitization and Chronic Beryllium Disease

- What do workers need to know about difference in these endpoints?
- What do recent longitudinal studies tell us about the prognosis for a beryllium sensitized worker?

Beryllium Exposure Controls

- Can a workplace with beryllium present be safe for BeS or CBD workers?
- What is full characterization of a workplace?
- How should health and safety personnel address legacy beryllium hazard in old or abandoned buildings?

Beryllium Sensitization and Chronic Beryllium Disease

- Long term surveillance
- Communication and interpretation of data
- Past vs. current exposure hazards

Beryllium Sensitization and Chronic Beryllium Disease

- Value of bronchoscopic evaluations in the prognosis
- Communication and interpretation of data
- Repeat evaluations

Beryllium Sensitization and Chronic Beryllium Disease

- Training and communication for workers, managers, and physicians about work restrictions.
- Medical removal.
- Disability?