



WHAT'S ON IN ITALY

SURVEILLANCE OF ACCIDENTS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HIGH-SPEED RAILWAY BETWEEN BOLOGNA AND FLORENCE.

Construction of the 93 km line (most under a tunnel) started in 1996 and has engaged an average of 2041 workers at any given time. During 1999-2002, a total of 562 accidents leading to a leave of absence longer than 3 days occurred in 395 out of 1604 workers engaged in the construction of tunnels with traditional techniques. Workers experiencing more than one and more than two accidents were respectively 111 (for a total of 278 accidents) and 37. The relative risk was highest (approximately 3 compared to other workers) for workers at the inverted arc. Limited to accidents requiring a leave of absence shorter than 30 days, risks were significantly lower in 2000-2002, and in relatively aged workers. In total, mortal accidents were 4.

A case-cross over study is being designed in order to investigate possible associations with unusual events in the construction of the railway. For information contact Daniela Cervino cervino.spsal@auslbosud.emr.it

ALLERGIC AND RESPIRATORY DISEASES IN CHILDREN AND YOUNGSTERS IN RELATION TO PARENTS' GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN.

The updated database of the Italian multicentric SIDRIA study on adverse respiratory changes in children was analyzed in order to compare immigrants and the indigenous population. Information was collected in 2002 through a questionnaire. Of 29305 subjects included in the study (17449 and 11856 aged respectively 6-7 and 13-14), both of whose parents were Italians, both immigrants and mixed were respectively 26293, 1340 and 1672. Each group has been broken down according to whether atopic conditions were or were not present in parents. Results indicate that, compared to the indigenous population, the origin of the family from foreign countries entails a relatively

low risk for lifetime asthma and allergic conditions: the protective effect, however, is limited to children born from non atopic parents. On the contrary, an excess risk for symptoms of bronchitis, such as cough and phlegma, was estimated in children of foreign origin. In the multivariate analysis (taking into account passive tobacco smoke, socioeconomic status, type of housing and familiarity) there were no differences for asthma and eczema between indigenous children and foreign-born children living in Italy for more than 5 years. This is one of the first epidemiological studies comparing populations of different ethnic origin living in Italy. For information contact Enrica Migliore Enrica_migliore@cpo.it

AREAS REQUIRING CLEANING UP BECAUSE OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION IN ITALY.

The Italian law 426/98 identified 14 polluted industrial areas requiring decontamination on the basis of health and/or environmental and/or social criteria. Approximately 40 additional areas with the same requirements were later identified by Regional authorities. Currently, the National Programme for clean up and environmental restoration includes 50 such sites. These are located all over the country, most are characterized by pollution of industrial origin (asbestos being the major concern in several of them). Although the programme is mainly addressed to decontamination, epidemiological surveillance is thought to have a major role in assessing both previous damage to populations' health and the long-term efficacy of decontamination. Seventeen polluted areas are located in Southern Italy, where databases and other tools for epidemiological research are less available than in the rest of the country. As a first step aimed at filling this gap, the Italian Ministries of Health and of Environment and the National Institute of Health have convened a Na-

tional seminar to be held in Rome (April 2004) on «Studies of Environmental Epidemiology in the areas being decontaminated». A survey of previous and on-going epidemiological investigations in the 17 areas has been prepared. The seminar will address two epidemiological case studies focussed on pollution from an asbestos-cement factory in Bari and from industrial concentration in Crotona. A second seminar is expected to take place later this year. Information from Pietro Comba, Istituto Superiore di Sanità comba@iss.it

QUALITY OF LIFE OF LONG-TERM SURVIVORS OF A CANCER IN CHILDHOOD.

The files of the Childhood Cancer Registry of Piedmont include clinical and demographic data of 1076 residents in the region, born before 1985, diagnosed a cancer before age 15 during 1967-95, who were alive in 2000. A study has started in order to collect information on their social integration as young adults and on their conditions of health. Persons included in the study will be contacted individually with a questionnaire addressing indicators of both social integration (school attendance and degree, occupation, civil state, other indicators of social life) and quality of life. The latter section focusses on some recent daily life events. In addition, for each subject, his/her health status will be assessed on the basis of information obtained from their general practitioner, from the pediatric oncological units which they had attended for the cancer which has been cured and from the nominative regional files of hospital admissions and of consumption of medicine. On the basis of previous experiences, a participation of 60-70% is expected. The protocol of the study has been approved by the Ethical Committee of the University of Piedmont. For additional information contact Daniela Alessi dany.ale@tin.it, or Guido Pastore pastore.guido@tin.it