

Prevalence of Pneumoconiosis in Taiwan and Mainland China and Its Implications

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the prevalence of pneumoconiosis in Taiwan and Mainland China since the mid-twentieth century. Pneumoconiosis was legally recognized as an occupational disease in Mainland China in 1957 and in Taiwan in 1958. During the past sixty years, the incidence of pneumoconiosis always ranked top among various occupational diseases in both Taiwan and Mainland China, constituting a share around 70-80% of all occupational diseases. In 2007, the cumulative cases of pneumoconiosis reached 627,405 in Mainland China, the highest incidence around the world. In Taiwan, survey research on pneumoconiosis began in the early 1950s, with most works being case studies. There has not been any comprehensive survey conducted. Pneumoconiosis is prevalent in various occupations. In Taiwan, except for the few cases of silicosis and asbestosis, the majority of cases were classified as “miner’s pneumoconiosis”. In Mainland China, the first nation-wide epidemiological survey of pneumoconiosis was conducted in 1987-1990, followed by several national statistical reports thereafter. Moreover, in 1987, pneumoconiosis was legally classified into 12 categories and the distribution of these categories varied with both localities and industries. In recent years, new technologies and medicines have been adopted in Mainland China for treating pneumoconiosis. However, as pneumoconiosis is chronic and lasting disease with no cure yet, it is more important to improve the occupational environment and safety measures for preventing and controlling further prevalence of this disease.

Keywords: Pneumoconiosis, Occupational Disease, Job Environment, Occupational Health and Safety for Workers