BHOPAL: MULTIGENERATIONAL HEALTH EFFECTS SEEN IN SURVIVORS OF THE WORLD’S WORST CHEMICAL DISASTER, AND TREATMENT FINDINGS

Aquene Freechild

Sambhavna Trust & Clinic, Environmental Health Fund, 41 Oakview Terrace, Jamaica Plain, MA, USA

Abstract: The 1984 Union Carbide methyl isocyanate gas leak and the ongoing water contamination from the subsequently abandoned plant site have together killed more than 22,000 people in Bhopal, India. Of an estimated half a million people exposed to Union Carbide's toxic gases in 1984, more than 100,000 people still suffer from exposure-induced chronic illnesses. Breathlessness, persistent cough, diminished vision, early cataracts, loss of appetite, menstrual irregularities, recurrent fever, body aches, loss of sensation in limbs, fatigue, weakness, anxiety and depression are the most common symptoms among survivors. There is also an apparent rise in cancers, tuberculosis, reproductive problems, as well as growth retardation and delayed puberty among children born after the disaster. The environmental contamination from the abandoned factory include thousands of tons of toxic wastes, including obsolete pesticides such as the persistent and bio-accumulative poison HCH (hexachlorocyclohexane) and heavy metals. Nearly 20,000 people living in the vicinity are routinely exposed to high loads of heavy metals, persistent chemicals and solvents, and chlorinated chemicals in their drinking water from local wells. Specific yoga asanas for hypertension, diabetes, and menstrual pain and irregularities have been the subject of a series of studies at the Sambhavna Clinic which provides free treatment to the survivors. The 1984 Bhopal Chemical disaster and plant-related water contamination has generated a wide range of respiratory, endocrine, immune and multi-systemic health effects that require further study. The clinic has found some helpful treatments and detoxification methods for the illnesses induced by toxic exposure in Bhopal; however there is much that US environmental health profession may be able to offer in terms of ideas for appropriate treatment protocols.

Keywords: Bhopal, methyl isocyanate, hypertension, yoga, ayurveda,

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