The Literature of Occupational Medicine in English

Before 1970

After 1700 and until about 1920, no educated physician was unaware of Ramazzini’s essential text *On the Diseases of Workers*, which was readily available in translation. Important British and American original works became available at about the same time in the nineteenth century but the United Kingdom and Europe remained far ahead of the US scientifically until the Second World War. Environmental medicine came along much later and did not develop a systematic literature until the latter twentieth century.

1700. Bernardino Ramazzini. *De Morbis Arterum [On the Diseases of Workers]*. The first book in the field and in many ways the most brilliant. A landmark in medical literature but also a stylistic tour de force in elegant Latin.

1785. James Hanway. *A Sentimental History of Chimney Sweepers in London and Westminster*.... London. The living and working conditions of chimney sweepers in England was scandalous. Boys as young as five did the work and were often disabled. This book was a call for reform and for, in effect, unionization.

1808. TheChirurgical Works of Percival Pott, FRS, Surgeon. (3 volumes) London. While his broken leg healed, Pott saw patients from his neighborhood as a general practitioner. He observed that chimney sweeps often developed cancer of the scrotum and correctly surmised that it was due to prolonged exposure to a cancer-causing chemical in the soot that stayed in their dirty clothes. That observation, published in this collection (Vol. 3, pp. 177 – 183) was both the first recognition of an occupational cancer and the beginning of research into the chemical carcinogenesis.

1831. Charles Turner Thackrah. The Effects of Arts, Trades, and Professions on Health and Longevity. Leeds. Thackrah was a young physician with an excellent medical education and astonishing powers of observation when he published this book documenting occupational health in England in the early days of the Industrial Revolution. His personal life resembles the plot of George Elliot’s *Middlemarch* and he died young after several professional setbacks.

done for England. He was also a strong proponent of public health in the early 19th C.


1916. George Kober and William Hanson. Diseases of Occupation and Vocational Hygiene. Philadelphia. At this time, occupational (also known as industrial or vocational) hygiene was considered the prevention part of occupational medicine. Kober was a professor at Georgetown University.

1919. Harry E. Mock. Industrial Medicine and Surgery. Philadelphia. An astonishingly original and humanitarian work advocating worker protection, education, health promotion, and equity. Mock was the medical director of Sears, Roebuck in Chicago. The organization that later became ACOEM was founded in his office in 1916.

1934. Sir Thomas Legge. Industrial Maladies. London. Legge was the first Medical Inspector of Factories (1898) and the most influential occupational physician in the UK in the early 20th C.

1935. Donald Hunter. Occupational Diseases. [Bound reprint] Hunter gave these four lectures to the Derby (UK) Medical Society, establishing himself as Legge’s intellectual successor. This copy is signed by Hunter.

1939. A. J. Lanza and Jacob A. Goldberg. Industrial Hygiene. New York. This book makes no distinction between industrial or occupational hygiene and occupational medicine, which were then one field.

1941. Rutherford T. Johnstone. Occupational Diseases: Diagnosis, Medicolegal Aspects, and Treatment. Johnstone (at UCLA) was the leading exponent of occupational medicine in southern California and mentor to Jean Spencer Felton, one of the leading humanists in our field.

1943. Howard E. Collier. Outlines of Industrial Medical Practice. London. The paper stock reflects wartime restrictions. This book was approved for publication because occupational medicine was considered essential to the war effort.

1943. C. O. Sappington. Essentials of Industrial Health. Philadelphia. This book marks the time during the Second World War when occupational/industrial hygiene began to separate from medicine and form closer ties to engineering. The author was a physician but was also the first to receive the degree of “doctor of
public health” (Dr.P.H.). He was a major leader in what are now the Central States Occupational Medical Association and ACOEM, and gave his name to the Sappington Lecture.

1946. Bernhard J. Stern. Medicine in Industry. This copy belonged to Alice Hamilton and is signed by her.

1954. E. R. A. Merewether. Industrial Medicine and Hygiene. (3 volumes) London. Merewether is best remembered for advocating strict controls on asbestos and warning of its hazards. He was also a formidable figure as Senior Medical Inspector of Factories, being both a physician and a barrister.


1978. Donald Hunter. The Diseases of Occupations, 6th ed. London. From the first edition in 1955 to the sixth, this was the one indispensable reference for occupational medicine in English and the history of particular occupational diseases and toxic exposures. Subsequent editions carry his name but were edited by others and are not as rich in history.