

30th. ICOH CONGRESS 2012

CANCUN, MEXICO

MIGRANT HEALTH PROBLEMS

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

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Pulmonary Findings in Popcorn Workers

- Have these exposures been associated with lung disease in other settings?
 - J. Lockey described a food flavoring plant employee with fixed airway obstruction, air trapping and normal DLCO on PFTs with bronchiolitis obliterans on open lung biopsy
- NIOSH Workshop Summary 8/25/01

DIACETYL ISSUE

DIACETYL AND THE PROBLEM OF CAUSATION:
"THE MOST DRAMATIC CASE OF CELL DEATH EVER SEEN."

It did not take long for the scientific community to conclude that the cluster of bronchiolitis obliterans found in Jasper, Missouri, was caused by something in the factory of the Gilder-Mary Lee Corporation. Dr. Allen Parmet, who treated some of the Jasper workers, asked the Missouri Department of Health to investigate the factory in early 2000, just one year after Eric Peoples's diagnosis.⁸ By March 2002, the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* published a letter to the editor that Dr. Parmet co-authored. The letter concludes:

The relative risk of a few former employees out of a total of approximately 400 is much higher than would be expected for the occurrence of bronchiolitis obliterans in the general population, which has been estimated to be between 1:40,000 and 1:100,000.

Bronchiolitis Obliterans Syndrome



First Trial \$20M

There are currently 31 trials pending and cases in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Ohio, Missouri, Nebraska and North Carolina

CHICAGO LAWYERS

A jury in Chicago has awarded the largest individual verdict in a popcorn lung disease case

The jury awarded \$30.4 million to Gerardo Solis who worked in plants that processed diacetyl, a butter flavoring, for about 20 years. The verdict was against diacetyl supplier BASF Corp.

The jurors assessed compensatory damages of \$32 million but subtracted 5% (\$1.6 million) for his portion of fault because he continued to work in butter flavoring plants after his first breathing symptoms appeared.

Doctors diagnosed Solis with bronchiolitis obliterans, an incurable lung disease. He currently has only 25% normal lung capacity and will probably need a lung transplant.

The Short Life and Preventable Death of Maria Isabel Vasquez Jimenez

Meet Maria Isabel Vasquez Jimenez.

On May 13, seventeen-year-old Maria was a farmworker, working the grape vineyard of West Coast Grape Farming in Stockton, California alongside her fiancée, Florentino Bautista.



Three days later, **Maria was dead** – killed after working nine straight hours in the broiling heat of the California summer, without access to water or shade.

Maria Isabel case



A group of California farmworkers who walked 50 miles carrying two wooden coffins arrived in Sacramento this week.

Their journey began near the vineyards where a 17-year-old undocumented farmworker died of heat exhaustion last month. Her death raises questions about how effectively California's heat-safety regulations work in the fields.

Maria Isabel Vasquez Jimenez was tying grape vines at a farm east of Stockton on May 14, when the temperature soared well above 95 degrees. The nearest water cooler was a 10-minute walk away, and workers say the strict foreman didn't allow them a long enough break to stop and get a drink. Vasquez collapsed from heat exhaustion. Her fiancé, Florentino Bautista, cradled her in his arms

Teen Farmworker's Heat Death Sparks Outcry

"When she fell, she looked bad," Bautista says. "She didn't regain consciousness". She just fell down and didn't react. I told her to be strong so we could see each other again."

Bautista, 19, had saved up money to buy a gold ring for Maria Isabel, his childhood sweetheart from their indigenous village in Oaxaca, Mexico. The farm labor contractor delayed bringing Jimenez to a hospital. Another employee took her to a drugstore to try and revive her with rubbing alcohol, Bautista says



Who cares?



In a written statement to NPR, Merced Farm Labor says Bautista was the one who decided to stop at the drugstore, and that he had refused the company's offer to call a doctor. Furthermore, the company says Jimenez wasn't engaged in strenuous work that day and had been working without apparent distress up to the time she collapsed.

What is clear is that by the time she arrived at a hospital, Jimenez was in a coma, and her body temperature topped 108 degrees. She died two days later. It was only at the hospital Bautista found out she was two months pregnant.

Wine magazine report



WHY THE DIFFERENCE

- GENDER
- AGE
- HEALTH STATUS
- SOCIOECONOMICAL LEVEL
- OCCUPATIONAL RISKS
- MEDIA COVERAGE
- LABOR STATUS (LEGAL vs ILEGAL)