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The dissemination of false data through inadequate citation.

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Source

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES:

That occupational exposure to **mercury** causes reproductive failure in dental personnel has been propagated by repeated reference to a single epidemiological study in Poland, published in 1987. The present paper scrutinizes the results of this study, and monitors its subsequent citation in the literature.

METHOD:

Articles referring to the study were located in the Science Citation Index. From references in these papers and through other references, further articles were found. These papers were reviewed, and their content organized in relation to the way in which the Polish study was cited.

RESULT:

Most authors referred to the findings in the Polish study without critical evaluation of the data presented.

CONCLUSIONS:

Citation of irrelevant or misleading scientific data in the literature raises unfounded concerns in nonscientific circles and may lead to unwarranted regulations. It is therefore essential that editors and reviewers of scientific articles also scrutinize the literature quoted.

Comment in

- [J Intern Med.](#) 1996 May;239(5):461.

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