

Key Findings from Research:

Worker Attitudes toward Genetic Testing for Beryllium Sensitivity

Title of Report and Authors:

Genetic Susceptibility Testing for Beryllium: Worker Knowledge, Beliefs, and Attitudes

Silver K, Kukulka G, Gorniewicz J, Rayman K, Sharp R [2011]. Am J Indus Med, Jul; 54(7):521-32.doi: 10.1002/ajim.20962. Epub 2011 May 6.

CPWR Report of the same name published in February 2009.

Overview:

Beryllium is the first industrial toxicant for which a valid genetic susceptibility test may soon be available. Researchers conducted focus groups, reaching 30 current and former workers and nine family members employed in DOE facilities in two rural states with limited job opportunities. This study is the first of its kind.

Key Findings:

- Some workers wanted to take the test voluntarily and know the results, so they could be more in control of their choices. They wanted to be able to tell their adult children before they were employed at a trade/facility w/beryllium exposure.
- Workers were fearful that the government/employer would find out the results of the tests, so they wanted to ensure that the testing entity would have financial and political independence from the employer.
- Workers were skeptical that employers would comply with a new genetic testing law prohibiting them from collecting or using genetic information.
- Worker education programs should address: the difference between an inherited trait vs. damage to genetic material, the social consequences of voluntarily disclosing your test result, and that a negative test doesn't mean risk-free.

Conclusions:

- A window of opportunity exists to create regional partnerships – labor, management, public health scientists, primary care professionals and others – for translational research, beginning with testing *former workers*.

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