Author's response to reviews

Title: Exposure of bakers and pastry apprentices to airborne flour dust

Authors:

Estelle EMG Mounier-Geyssant Ph.D. (estellemounier@yahoo.fr)
Jean-Francois JFB Barthelemy Ph.D. (jean-francois.barthelemy@inrs.fr)
Lory LM Mouchot Miss (lory.mouchot@nancy.inserm.fr)
Christophe CP Paris Pr. (christophe.paris@nancy.inserm.fr)
Denis DZN Zmiou-Navier Pr. (denis.zmiou@nancy.inserm.fr)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear Editor,

Please find enclosed the manuscript entitled: “Exposure of bakers and pastry apprentices to airborne flour dust”, by Estelle MOUNIER-GEYSSANT, Jean-François BARTHELEM, Lory MOUCHOT, Christophe PARIS and Denis ZMIROU-NAVIER (corresponding author). We submit this paper for publication in the BMC Public Health.

Apprentices, like bakers (or confectioners) are exposed to flour dust but exposure studies among bakery and pastry apprentices are lacking. The purpose of this study is to describe exposure levels of apprentices to flour dust used in bakeries and confectioneries. It is conducted in the framework of a research on the incidence of occupational asthma among young apprentices, due to inhalation of sensitising agents in the workplace. While it is premature to publish any result, we can state for your appreciation that, among a first group of 71 apprentices who completed their training, with no respiratory condition at the start of the follow-up, one out of 6 is hyper-reactive with metacholine testing after 18 months of apprenticeship, well above what we anticipated, an observation that might explain why the asthma toll is so high in this occupation category.

The results show that apprentices experience substantial exposure to flour dust, a known sensitizing agent, early after engaging into apprenticeship.

This work, we think, opens routes to further improve work conditions of apprentices in order to protect their respiratory health; these prevention lines of action are equally applicable for senior bakers and confectioners.

We thank you for the attention you will pay to this article.

Sincerely yours.

Estelle MOUNIER-GEYSSANT (Ph.D.)