Appeal from worker and mother: Should I give up or wait to die?

Wednesday, August 12, 2015

Wu Chengcheng is a 41-year-old Chinese female worker and mother who is suffering from serious occupational diseases (including pneumonia, emphysema, pulmonary bullae, a blood disease, and high fever) as a result of chemicals she was exposed to over several years working at a factory called TPV Electronics in Fujian, which has worked with companies that include Philips, Tongda, Envision, and others. The factory did not take precautions to protect Chengcheng from serious chemicals like dimethylbenzene, benzene, and cleaners. She was not given proper training or protection on the job. And once she secured official verification of occupational disease, the company fired her.

Chengcheng is currently seeking donations to help cover the costs of her medical care and to support her daughter, who is entering the fifth grade. Chengcheng writes:

"No matter how strong I am, I am still afraid of death. I love my child just like all mothers do. I cannot just leave my young child by herself. But I also have dignity. My situation would be a dilemma for any woman. Today I am seeking help from the public, hoping kind people will help me."

If you want to support Chengcheng and her daughter, you can donate to China Labor Watch via Paypal or check with the note or memo "Wu Chengcheng". We will make sure the full donation received reaches Chengcheng. She also shares her bank account information at the end of the full appeal below, should you wish to donate directly to her.

Should I give up or wait to die?

Written by Wu Chengcheng on July 18, 2015

It was almost the Spring Festival [Chinese New Year] of 2012. Families were supposed to observe the festival at home. We down-to-earth country people do not expect much except for enough food to eat, clothing, and good health. However, our life depends on Heaven’s will. With favorable weather, we can get considerable crop yields; but when we are caught with frost or hailstorm, we can only make do with our life.

Ever since the Reform and Opening [a policy lead by Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping beginning in 1978], cities in China started to take in us country people. During years of hunger, men from the rural areas would leave their wives and children at home for jobs in cities. Their jobs are those that urban residents do not want to do: construction, production line worker, cleaning, and dishwashing. However, we feed ourselves through honest labor. We are willing to do this work, and in this work we have peace of mind.

But men who left the country for cities were not always paid for their honest labor. Some had to walk and beg all the way from Beijing to get home. Therefore, no matter what the year was like, I had never thought about leaving for the cities.

Nevertheless, life coerces people. I tried to carry some tea and sell it, but there were no buyers. The rice I planted was in a bad state. In order to support the elderly and the young in my family, I chose to go to the city to sell my manual labor.

Without a proper education or skill, I decided to go to the city before the Spring Festival, because it was the easiest time to find a job there.

This is how my husband and I ended up coming to work at the Jielian Electronics Company in Yunnan’s Fuging City (Yuanhonglushang Township) before the Spring Festival in 2012. [Jielian is a manufacturer of computer parts. Its English name is TPV Electronics (Fujian). In online company information, TPV has been a partner of Philips, Tongda, Envision, and others.] There I worked as material cleaners in a clean room of the factory. From February 9, 2012 to January 14, 2013, my job was to clean plastic frames in the clean room. I had to use a special vacuum to suck dust off the frames. When I was not cleaning plastic frames, I would clean the bathroom in the workshop. Before January 14, 2013, I was dispatched to clean film parts due to a shortage of workers in that position. I was the first female worker to be shifted between two positions in the clean room. Later, I was permanently transferred to the film-cleaning position without
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receiving any proper training.

Below is a so-called training quiz, with the answers already filled out and given to workers for copying.
A month after I started in that position, the company asked me to take a test for the operation certification for my position and gave me the answers to the test. My daily job involved frequent contact with anti-static cleaner, or pure ethanol if the cleaner wasn’t available. I used them to clean my gloves 22 times every day. These are volatile, flammable, and explosive chemicals. To this day, I still have no idea what the major elements of the film parts are. All I know is that it is a part in computers that is heat-resistant, diffuses light, and reflect lights. After I started working in this position, I began to frequently get nose bleeds. At first, I treated it as a minor problem and did not pay much attention to the symptom.

In 2014, the workshop was retooled, and a new TOUCH production line was added to the workshop. Since 2014, a fire-proof cabinet was placed near the machine I was working on.

Below are photos of some of the chemicals in Chengcheng work environment.
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http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/newscast/479
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Inside the cabinet, there was anti-static cleaner, isopropyl alcohol, industrial alcohol, and glue. Whenever the isopropyl alcohol was being used in the printing workshop, its harsh smell would drift everywhere. Workers in the workshop sometimes refer to the isopropyl alcohol as bowl-washing water due to the similarity in the pronunciation of the two words.

The printing workshop moved out of the factory later, leaving two light panel repairmen working near my machine. My working area was piled with light panels.

Perhaps because of the newly added line, the management of the company started to fall behind. The glue used by the TOUCH line was held in plastic plates, plastic bottles, and container near me. The glue gives off an extremely strong and bothersome odor.

At that time, I begin coughing up things. In the picture is a glue-holding plate placed near me. The ventilation outlet in my working area was completely sealed with PE film. The air compressor above my machine brings polluted air into my 2-square-meter workshop, causing glue to drip down on the walls around me and a harsh-smelling oil fog inside the workshop.

I was suffering from frequent sneezing, dizziness, nausea, stabbing pain in my arms and legs, and breathing problems at that time. Later on, I became faint from difficulty breathing. I was then hospitalized and tested. The following pictures are the test results. [For the reader's convenience, all medical record photos have been copied into an attachment at the end of this narrative.]

I had allergies all over my body. I was covered with red dots and suffering from severe itches. I went to the Guoshimen Village Health Center and then to the Dermatological Department in the Fuqing City Hospital. When my health condition started to worsen, I had to go to a blood disease hospital, where doctors treated me with hemogenesis medicines, some other traditional Chinese medicines, and steroids. The cost for medical treatment is very high. I hoped for help from my Department Manager Lin Xiurui, because years ago, I had made donations to help a coworker with their own difficulties. But because I told Lin that the doctor said my sickness was related to my work, she turned me down. I wanted to ask the manager Lin Ruixiu, Nurse Chen Qiulan, and Workshop Director Rong Yuhao, if you would have kept the harsh chemicals under control, would I have ever developed a pulmonary disease? If you would have placed the cabinet away from me at a safe distance, covered up harmful chemicals, and kept them from leaking, I would not have had severe allergies.

I want to ask the Workshop Director Rong Yujie and Nurse Chen Qiulan, when I reported the production situation to you, why would you still make me take the risk and continue to work? When I had an accident in the workshop, why did you only allow me to have some water in the break room without seeing the severity of the problem? As the superiors of a worker, whenever there is a production safety accident, you should take responsibility for the treatment of the victim in the accident, which you have failed to do. When I was hospitalized for the first time, I did not request a diagnosis for occupational disease. I was fired later because you think I should not have gotten a diagnosis for occupational diseases as I did.

Of course this is not the shocking part; the shocking part is how the relevant government authorities treated the whole thing.

Let me start with Fuzhou Disease Control and Prevention Center. After the first treatment for my blood disease, my platelets index got under control. On October 14, 2014, I had a physical exam in Fuzhou Disease Control and Prevention Center. I was told I’d receive the results three days later. But when I returned to the Center for my results as scheduled, they refused to give me the results. I did not get
them until the results for my diagnosis came out. During this period of time, I experienced problems and pain from breathing.

Therefore, I went to the Department of Respiratory in Fuzhou General Hospital and saw Doctor Liu Linsen, the director of the department. He asked me to get an x-ray. But considering that my platelets index had just returned to a normal range, an x-ray wasn’t the best idea. Doctor Liu asked me to get the X-ray film from the Center or to ask about the results since I had previously gotten an x-ray there.

I failed to get the film from Fuzhou Disease Control and Prevention Center. When I asked about the results, a staff member was evasive about it but told me there were increased bronchovascular markings and dense dark spots. Only now do I know that giving the results of the physical exam to the patient does not mean you’ll get the diagnosis. Why would they deprive me of my right to know my diseases? What benefit do they get by holding my diagnosis? How does it benefit a patient? How about the company; how does it benefit them? Why is it that what I heard about my exam results and what was actually given to me are different?

On November 19, 2014, Shen Bo, a department chief of Fuzhou Disease Control and Prevention Center, agreed to conduct the diagnosis. He did not provide me any written response on receiving my documents. I told him the diagnosis should be an obstructive pulmonary disease, hypersensitivity pneumonitis, and asthma caused by irritating chemicals. Only on July 15, 2015 did an expert from the Medical Association of Fuzhou say during the medical evaluation that they were unable to complete the evaluation because Fuzhou Disease Control and Prevention Center did not provide a diagnosis regarding my respiratory system. I do not know about the legal basis for medical evaluations, but it was very distressing. On July 15, a city official from Fuzhou gave me 300 RMB ($47) and told me to apply for an evaluation of my respiratory system at Fuzhou Disease Control and Prevention Center, because he pitied me and my daughter. I took my daughter along with me for the evaluation because no one else was able to look after her. July 16, I went to the Health Department of Fujian Province. Wang, an official from the Comprehensive Supervision Office, told me to request a diagnosis from Fuzhou Disease Control and Prevention Center. Later that afternoon, I went to the Center and found that the department chief, Shen Bo, was away. A female secretary of the department told me to come again on Monday (July 20).

This problem continues going in a circle, and I cannot get one easy breath because I cannot afford the medical treatment.

Now I want to talk about the Fuzhou Administration of Work Safety.

Fuging Bureau of Health’s Health Supervision Department investigated my work site two times. During their first sampling, they only collected the anti-static cleaner and an adhesive 320, which had already been improved and was not the same chemical used when the accident happened. The glue residue at the site was not collected during either of the two investigations. Moreover, the inspectors chose to believe what the company told them about the chemicals they had used, instead of believing in the pictures of the chemicals I had taken. They need to at least give an explanation. Why can’t they do an elements test of the cabinet and the films at my station? Why didn’t they try to understand my actual position duties?

As professional inspection authorities of the more developed regions of our country, do they really not know the company cheated in the investigations, or are they being partial to the company? Whichever it is, they should know they are doing it at the risk of my health and life. Don’t they feel even a little guilty? Although I was there when they sealed the sample of the cleaner, I was not there when they opened the sample for examination. My sample contains benzene, toluene, and xylene that exceed the standard limits. The test results are very different.

In June 2015, my daughter was on vacation. She caught a cold and started coughing and developing a fever. When I was in the hospital at the time, the little emergency funds I had made my heart shiver. I am a person and a mother. I have dignity. With a blood disease, pneumonia, pulmonary emphysema, pulmonary bullae, and a fever, I went to look for help from the labor union in Rongqiao Urban Management Committee, hoping the union could give me a helping hand during this difficult time.

The staff in the union asked me to go home and wait for them to call me. I expressed my wish to see somebody in charge, but a male
staff member rejected my request. His words disappointed me and drove me into tears. Because I had pneumonia, I am afraid that if I have my daughter in the same room with me, she could contract the disease. She has a tough fate. It is unfair for her to have to face a life-and-death matter with me. My daughter’s name is Yang Yang. She is in Class One of grade four in Shimen Elementary School, Honglu Township, Fuzhou City, Fujian Province. She will be in fifth grade next semester. I feel guilty for what she has to go through. Children from the countryside are well-behaved. I am a burden to her. I did not do any parenting for the whole year of 2014. I do not want to die. If I die, she’ll have a stepmother. She is an honest and delicate girl. I just want to watch her grow up.

That is why I went to the union and the Women’s Federation for help. I am already indebted because of my health condition. Maybe one also needs connections to get financial aid.

I do not have any connections, so work is more realistic for me. Although I had a fever, pneumonia, pulmonary emphysema, and pulmonary bullae, I was still working. I cannot do production line work, so the company put me in a department where I feed pigs, chicken, goats, and plant vegetables, which I was willing to do.

However, on June 25, 2015, the HR personnel in the company formally informed me that I had been terminated. I felt like the sky had collapsed at the moment. What should I do? My child needs to eat and I am sick. I could barely work but I am severely indebted. That day I kept crying as I thought about this. I admit that I am a strong person. Other patients have relatives to stay with them in the hospital. I had blood and bone marrow drawn in the hospital by myself. On the day I was fired, I wanted to go to my department to close things out, but an HR manager named Cheng Yi stopped me and asked a security guard to make sure I went out a certain exit. No matter how strong I am, as a sick person with fever and blood disease in that situation, I could not help but cry. I felt helpless and desperate. If it was not for my daughter, I would consider death as an option. I could not leave the child who curls up beside me in bed every night.

Later on, I was notified to go back to work by Cheng Yi. But I was also notified that the days I missed since I was fired would be counted as absent days. Those days had already reached a sufficient length where the company would fire me again. This was just one disaster after another. I tried to contact the president of the company Xuan Jiansheng through his email address (jx.huang@tpvaoc.com), hoping that he was not only rich but also kind and would help me. After all, I have been in this company for almost four years and I treat the company as my own home. Even the Chairman [President] of China would hold workers hands and ask about their well-being. As an employee of the president [of the company], he might care about me. But that is just my own wishful thinking. All my hope is evaporating again.

No matter how strong I am, I am still afraid of death. I love my child just like all mothers do. I cannot just leave my young child by herself. But I also have dignity. My situation would be a dilemma for every woman. Today I am seeking help from the public, hoping kind people will help me. Please help me by making a donation to the bank account shown in the picture below.

Bank cardholder name: Wang Chengcheng. If anybody thinks I am lying, call the police and ask them to arrest me. I already have nowhere to go. Maybe getting arrested would give me a chance to survive.

Attachment: medical-related records of Wu Chengcheng
诊断意见：
颅脑MR平扫示：1. 双侧上颌窦、筛窦炎性变
颈部MR平扫示：双侧颈部多发小淋巴结，建议随访。

检查日期：2014-9-11
报告医生：
审签医生：

检查印象：
通气功能基本正常，小气道重度损害。

影像所见：
胸片示：左肺下叶有局限性透过度增选，并可见絮状透光影，境界尚清；双肺下叶肺野双肺上叶肺野纹理增强，边界模糊，双肺门不大。增强扫描示：肺、胸水未见异常实质性病变。双肺门不大。CT检查示：肺内未见肿块及肺部淋巴结，双侧胸膜未见液性低密度影及胸腔积液。

印象：
1. 左肺下叶炎性肺气肿并肺大泡形成。
2. 双肺下叶炎性病变，建议治疗后复查。
### 超声提示：
1. 考虑双侧乳腺增生
2. 左侧乳腺无回声结节（BI-RADS II类，建议定期复查）
3. 双侧腋下可见淋巴结

### 检查印象：
通气功能基本正常，小气道重度损害。

### 血液检查结果：
- **RDW-SD**
  - 39.8
- 血小板减少
- 平均血小板体积增高
- 血小板分布宽度增高

仅供临床参考
### 病史和诊断

<table>
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<tr>
<td>主诉</td>
<td>发热支气管炎及过敏性鼻炎反复发作。</td>
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<tr>
<td>诊断</td>
<td>手足口病</td>
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### 治疗

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<tr>
<td>2. 喹诺酮</td>
<td>500mg x 1片</td>
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<td>3. 阿奇霉素片</td>
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<td>4. 氨酚烷胺片</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. 多西环素片</td>
<td>0.2g x 3片</td>
<td>口服，1片/日</td>
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### 其他

- **患者信息**
  - 女，41岁
  - ID8277520
  - 就诊日期：2014.09.03
  - 简明病历：发热支气管炎及过敏性鼻炎反复发作。
### 分析:

- 唾液腺炎：
  - 炎性：上皮细胞增生，淋巴细胞浸润，间质水肿，淋巴细胞浸润，淋巴细胞和浆细胞浸润，淋巴细胞和浆细胞浸润。
  - 新生血管：血管内皮细胞增生，血管内皮细胞增生，血管内皮细胞增生，血管内皮细胞增生。
  - 基质：间质水肿，淋巴细胞浸润，淋巴细胞和浆细胞浸润，淋巴细胞和浆细胞浸润。

- 其他：
  - 无明显异常。

### 意见：

- 诊断：
  - 诊断意见：慢性唾液腺炎

### 申请科室：耳鼻喉科门诊

- 日期：2014-11-10

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**内容：**
反复鼻塞、流清涕、鼻痒、打喷嚏半年。查体：双侧鼻粘膜苍白、水肿，鼻腔内有多量水样分泌物，鼻腔内未见新生物。建议：鼻用激素喷鼻、抗过敏药物口服治疗。

- 食物：
  - 建议忌食辛辣刺激性食物，忌烟酒；清热解毒。