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'Fluorosis' Among Chinese Villagers Caused by Polluted Coal Smoke

by Rathi Manohar on October 21, 2010 at 7:36 PM

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Fluorosis is targeting villagers in isolated regions of southwestern China, who use coal in their daily lives.

The disease is caused by a toxin released during the burning process, according to an ongoing investigation by

chemists at the University at Buffalo in New York.

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The researchers are presenting their work today at the AVS 57th International Symposium and Exhibition at the Albuquerque Convention Center in New Mexico.

According to the researchers, the toxin in question is fluoride, which binds to calcium in the human body and causes the disease fluorosis, a condition that affects millions of Chinese in Guizhou province and also causes dental problems like discoloured and pitted teeth, joint pain, muscular degeneration, and deformities in joints and the spine.

Polluted water is considered to be the most common source of excessive fluoride, but Joseph Gardella, a chemist at UB who has collaborated on a research project with Professor Handong Liang of the China University of Mining and Technology in Beijing (CUMTB), said that polluted coal might also be a major factor.

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