

## **Health, Work and Medicine in Spanish Enlightenment**

Alfredo Menéndez Navarro y Esteban Rodríguez Ocaña

### **Abstract:**

The present article is the first of a series that aims to show the social and intellectual factors that led to the development of medical concerns with workers' health in our country and to address the different forms taken by this care throughout the modern and contemporary period. The study is based on an analysis of the bibliographic production of Spanish physicians on this issue and on the reconstruction of the care and preventive practices that resulted from the incorporation of medicine into the working world. This first article focuses on the pre-industrial period, paying special attention to the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the bases were established for a systematic medical approach to work-related diseases. This was largely a product of the growing influence of mercantilist theories, which assigned an increasingly important economic value to health. The medical standpoint was expressed in various narrative genres, from descriptions of new diseases caused by work activity to hygienic recommendations to preserve the health of workers in certain occupations. On the other hand, the work setting permitted the legitimisation of new knowledge and practices related to the health and illness of workers, reserving new competences for healthcare professionals. In the same way, medicine began to fulfil a normative function in the work setting, modelling the values of the workers and regulating their behaviour patterns in accordance with the requirements of the productive order.