

CANCER

Asbestos exposure linked to digestive cancer

Exposure to asbestos leads to cancer of the small intestine and esophagus in men, a new study reports.

“Exposure to asbestos leads to cancer of the small intestine and esophagus in men...”

“Asbestos-related cancers are a major public health issue with important medicolegal, social and political implications,” explains Bénédicte Clin, lead investigator. Contradictory reports on the relationship between asbestos exposure and digestive cancer led Clin and her team from the University Hospital, Côte de Nacre, France, to investigate the incidence of digestive cancers in a cohort of 2,024 individuals who had been occupationally exposed to asbestos.

Their retrospective morbidity study made use of a local digestive cancer

registry to calculate digestive cancer incidence between 1978 and 2004 in both the study cohort, and the local general population. Asbestos exposure was determined using a matrix developed on the basis of workplace atmospheric fiber concentration data. Cancer incidence was analyzed in two ways—according to cumulative exposure during an individual’s career and according to exposure level and duration.

The incidence of cancer of the small intestine and of the esophagus was significantly elevated in men with a cumulative exposure of >80 fibers/ml over the duration of their career. Furthermore, men exposed to asbestos for ≥25 years, and at a mean level of >4 fibers/ml, had a significantly elevated incidence of cancer of the small intestine. The incidence of peritoneal mesothelioma was significantly higher in occupationally exposed individuals, regardless of exposure levels, and this



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elevated incidence was particularly notable in women.

The authors plan to publish their findings on the association between asbestos exposure and risk of cancer for all anatomic sites.

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