

**ASBESTOS
JACKING**

Cocarcinogenic Effect of Smoking and Asbestos Exposure

Q In the July 24, 1972, issue of THE JOURNAL a question appeared about compensability for lung cancer developing in an asbestos worker who had smoked a pack of cigarettes every day for 30 years. The consultant who answered the question said that he did not know of any such cases coming to litigation. He also stated he was unaware of any firm conclusions having been derived from studies aimed at determining whether or not there is a high incidence of cancer in smokers exposed to asbestos. I have been under the impression that asbestos workers who smoke are at a distinct risk with respect to lung cancer, more so than asbestos workers who do not smoke. Can you tell me whether my assumption is correct?

MD, Missouri

A Information concerning the increased risk of lung cancer among asbestos workers has been published.¹ These data indicate that asbestos workers who smoke cigarettes have approximately eight times the risk of death from lung cancer that other smokers of the same age have, who do not work with asbestos.

E. C. Hammond, ScD, and I will shortly publish the results of another study bearing on this question. We have followed up 9,590 asbestos-insulation workers from Jan 1, 1967, through Dec 31, 1971; each of these individuals had a history of cigarette smoking. We have calculated expected deaths and have compared them with those observed during the period in question. While 25 deaths from lung cancer were expected, 134 occurred. There seems to be little doubt, then, that exposure to asbestos significantly increases the risk of lung cancer among cigarette smokers. I am aware, too, of a number of cases, adjudicated in favor of the plaintiff, that involved lung cancer associated with asbestos exposure in cigarette-smoking asbestos workers.

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1. Selikoff LJ, Hammond EC, Oberg J: Asbestos exposure, smoking, and neoplasia. *JAMA* 204:106-112, 1968.