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Researchers Link Asbestos To Rare Form of Cancer

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The Evening Bulletin
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By a Staff Correspondent

New York, Oct. 6—Asbestos, associated with lung cancer by a New York study team last April, has also been linked to a rare kind of cancer called mesothelioma.

This is cancer of the linings of the chest and abdominal cavities, called the mesothelia.

Dr. Irving J. Selikoff of Mt. Sinai Hospital here, speaking in Philadelphia last spring, revealed that insulation workers in New York who handle asbestos and other insulating materials have:

—A seven-fold greater incidence of lung cancer than the general population.

—A two-fold increase of cancers of the stomach, colon and rectum.

Updated Report

This happens, he said, because asbestos is a mineral fiber that is virtually indestructible. Once lodged in tissues of lung or digestive tract, it stays there and can be clearly seen with a microscope.

In an updated report to the American Public Health Association here today, Dr. Selikoff added mesothelioma to the list. Ten cases had been found among 307 insulation workers who died since 1943, he said.

All of the workers had been in the same trade for 35 years or more, indicating that long-term exposure may be necessary to cause cancer.

Enters Atmosphere

Asbestos is used for insulation, as a flooring material, in automobile brake shoes, and in many other applications. Ordinary wear and tear release asbestos dust into the atmosphere where it can be inhaled.

Asbestos is a mineral, magnesium silicate, and about 3½ million tons of it are used worldwide each year, Dr. Selikoff said. In 1946, worldwide use was amounted to about 500 tons, the researcher said.

Takes Many Years

Dr. E. Cuyler Hammond, American Cancer Society statistical expert, said the expected incidence of mesotheliomas is about one in 10,000 deaths.

Dr. Hammond was a member of the study team and a co-author of today's report.

He suggested during a press conference that long-term exposure to asbestos may not be necessary, that a single fiber inhaled or eaten may do the damage, but that it takes many years for the cancer to develop.

With increasing amounts of asbestos being used it is important to continue the studies linking it to cancer, said Dr. Hammond.

Couple Wed 61 Years

Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Carre, of 2443 Grays Ferry av., are celebrating their 61st wedding anniversary today. They have one child, one grandchild and three great-grandchildren.

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