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NYT

Asbestos Exposure Is Linked to Cancer In Cigarette Smoker

By The Associated Press

Two cancer researchers say they have confirmed through human lung cancer cases the theory that occupational exposure to asbestos enhances the cancer-causing effects of cigarette smoke.

Asbestos exposure by itself, they reported yesterday, does not appear to increase the incidence of lung cancer among asbestos workers who do not smoke.

These findings, the researchers said, confirm studies based on such approaches as reviewing medical records but also come from what they describe as the first study they are aware of based on actual lung cancer specimens.

The report in the journal Cancer, a publication of the American Cancer Society, was written by two pathologists, Dr. Milton Kannerstein of the Barnert Memorial Hospital Center in Paterson, N. J., and Dr. Jacob Churg of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York.

The pathologists said they had compared 50 lung cancer cases in patients occupationally exposed to asbestos with 50 matched control cases in persons not exposed to asbestos.

The incidence of lung cancer among cigarette-smoking asbestos workers was 92 times as high as it is for nonsmokers not exposed to asbestos.

"It would appear then," Dr. Kannerstein and Dr. Churg said, "that it is as a cocarcinogen, in combination with cigarette smoking, that asbestos has an effect"

A similar situation has been suggested for lung cancer among uranium miners, they said.

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