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Asbestos Blamed for Increase in Ovary Cancer

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Special to The Inquirer
And Los Angeles Times

SAN DIEGO, March 27.—Asbestos, a common material in modern industry, has been indicted as a possible culprit in the dramatic increase of ovarian cancer during the last 100 years.

Suspected since 1963 of being involved in the rise of lung cancer, its implication in cancer of the ovaries, however, is relatively new.

Doctors associating asbestos with both ovarian and lung cancer noted that use of the material has increased a thousand times since the turn of the century.

And delegates attending an American Cancer Society seminar here were told Wednesday that asbestos gets into the air from:

Cars' brake linings, air conditioning systems in which it is used for filtering, insulating materia. used for heating ducts and wiring, plastic floor tile and many other common uses.

"It is ubiquitous in our environment," said Dr. John B. Graham of the Roswell Park Memorial Institute, State University of New York at Buffalo. "And it is virtually indestructible."

During a speech, Dr. Graham, noted the serious and growing problem of cancer of the ovary by pointing out it now ranks third in cancer deaths among women.

Even more remarkable, he added, is the fact that it has quadrupled in the United States and Western Europe since 1900.

"A century ago it was relatively rare. Now it is common and increasing," Dr. Graham said.

The increase among western women, when considered with the fact that ovarian cancer still is rare in Latin America and Asia, suggests some cause of it must be peculiar to modern western life, he added.

He pointed the accusing finger at asbestos, although he said the case against this substance is not yet proved.

Dr. W. A. D. Anderson of the University of Miami, who said an increased incidence of lung cancer among asbestos workers was noticed years ago, reported that asbestos fibers have been found in the lungs of 31 percent of men and 20 percent of the women in a study done in Miami. In other cities, he said, the percentages are even higher.

He thinks it may affect cancers other than lung cancers, such as ovarian cancer, because it is absorbed into the digestive and circulatory systems as well as by respiratory organs.

According to Dr. Graham, although asbestos particles have not actually been found in ovarian tumors, they have been found in the surrounding tissues.

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