

Animal experiments proved that all sorts of asbestos induce mesothelioma if introduced into the pleural cavity. Inhaled asbestos fibres may reach this cavity in a mechanical way; the amphibole types - especially crocidolite - with their peculiar shape of fibre, have to be looked upon as the most dangerous (see chapter IV).

Being mostly an occupational disease in heavy industry mesothelioma is observed more frequently in males than in females; however observations have been made of a high incidence of mesothelioma in females who worked in a factory of crocidolite containing gas-masks during World War II.

There is a long latency period varying from 15 to 40 years.

Diagnosis of mesothelioma is difficult, the symptoms easily leading to false diagnoses (see chapter IX). Both factors - latency period and difficulty of diagnosis - explain the late discovery of the association with asbestos.

4. Peritoneal mesothelioma (see chapter IX-4).

This is the same type of tumour, but now starting from the mesothelial layers of the peritoneum. An association with uptake of asbestos has to be accepted. As in pleural mesothelioma, occupational exposure may lead to an excess incidence.

The asbestos-fibres in these cases are probably ingested in appreciable quantities, either directly or indirectly. In other cases growth of a pleural mesothelioma through the diaphragm is seen.

In peritoneal mesothelioma the latency period is also long. The disease is fatal; there is no known cure.

5. Cancers of gastrointestinal tract (see chapter IX-4)

Epidemiological investigations in cohorts of asbestos-insulators - heavily exposed workers - proved an excess mortality by ~~cancer~~ of the gastrointestinal tract. Comparison with the mortality rates in non-exposed groups leads to the conclusion that asbestos uptake is a cause of this excess incidence.

8001 0773