

AbstractLaboratory Findings (Serologic and Enzyme) with Asbestosis

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The extensive fibrogenic and carcinogenic activity of asbestos fibers is by now well known. For an agent with such potent biological effects, it may be surprising that there are few serologic or enzymatic correlates of this activity.

Rheumatoid factor has been demonstrated in the serum of a variable proportion of patients with asbestosis, depending on the method of selection. The significance of this finding is not known. In particular, a positive rheumatoid factor does not indicate the existence of a syndrome analogous to Caplan's Syndrome.

Carcino-embryonic antigen (CEA) is elevated in people with asbestosis. This, too, is a non-specific finding.

Anti-nuclear antibodies (ANA) may also be detected in people with asbestosis. This is not a diagnostic finding, and its significance is not clear.

The assay for hyaluronic acid in the pleural fluid does not reliably distinguish between benign and malignant pleural effusions in patients with asbestosis.

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