

MESOTHELIOMA—LIEBEN & PISTAWKA

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remely low. Not all mesotheliomas were reported to us by the hospitals, but, even if we double the incidence, only a minute fraction of the exposed population was affected. There are precedents for this with beryllium disease which acts in a somewhat similar pattern; occupational diseases, familial contacts, neighborhood cases plus a very low attack rate, and a long latent period between exposure and onset of disease.

Another question which arises is why pleural mesotheliomas are so much more frequent than peritoneal mesotheliomas.

The most striking finding of this study was that of the 42 mesotheliomas which came from a geographical area of approximately 30,000 sq mi, six were clustered in and around an insulation plant (Figure). These included two insulation manufacturing workers (Cases 2-O and 3-O), three neighborhood cases (Cases 2-N, 3-N, and 4-N) and one family contact (Case 2-F)—the daughter of an insulation worker.

Summary

Forty-two cases of mesotheliomas reported from 152 hospitals over a five-year period, were studied with regard to exposure to asbestos. Survivors or employers, or both, were questioned regarding the possibility of asbestos exposure. Ten patients actually worked in asbestos plants; eight lived or worked close to an asbestos industry; three patients were family members of asbestos workers. In ten patients a history of assumed exposure to asbestos was obtained after prolonged questioning. In 11 other pa-

tients no history of asbestos exposure could be obtained.

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DISCOVERY OF QUININE

Many of the drug sources known in ancient times were apparently discovered by accident. For example, according to an old South American Indian legend, the curative power of cinchona bark (containing quinine) for malaria was discovered by a sick, feverish Indian lost in the jungle. He quenched his thirst by drinking from a pool of water. From the bitter taste of the water, he recognized that it was tainted with the poison from the quina-quina tree. Although he shared this fictitious belief, he drank deeply so as to bring about a quick death. To his great surprise, he recovered completely. When he returned to his village, he told the story of his cure and thereafter cinchona bark was used as a medicine for the fever prevalent in that region. The Incas later taught the Spanish conquistadors that malaria could be cured with cinchona extract.—Rossman, R.E.: The History and Significance of Serendipity in Medical Discovery, *Trans Coll Physicians Phila* 33:104-120 (Oct) 1965.