IX-3 RESPIRATORY EXPOSURE AND OTHER MALIGNANCIES

In recent years attention has been drawn to a possible relationship between asbestos exposure and malignant tumours of the head and neck. Stell et al (1973a) questioned 100 male patients with carcinoma of the larynx, oral cavity, oropharynx, nose, sinuses, and hypopharynx about their exposure to asbestos, in comparison with a matched control series. There was an excess of past asbestos exposure in cases of laryngocarcinoma. This was investigated in more depth (Stell et al 1973b); in 100 patients with this disease 31% had important exposure to asbestos as compared with 3% in 100 controls; the latency period was 1 to 54 years; the maximum incidence was in the 51-60 age group as compared with the usual maximum incidence in the 61-70 age group; there was no difference in smoking habits. The occupations of the carcinoma cases pointed to a possibly intensive exposure; other environmental agents may have been present also. Newhouse (1973b) found 2 deaths due to larynx carcinoma among 4000 workers followed up for many years; in both cases there was severe exposure to asbestos. Lilenhitz et al (1974) also described three patients who at the same time had evidence of asbestosis. The data available point to a relationship with asbestos exposure, probably of severe intensity. There is not yet any indication of a health risk in case of "true" environmental exposure.

Doniach et al (1975) brought forward a hitherto unconfirmed relationship between the presence of asbestos bodies in lung tissue and mammary carcinoma: 38 observed against 26.3 expected; this did not appear to be due to occupation, area of residence or age. The possible pathogenesis is not understood; the suggestion has been made that asbestos fibres might infiltrate the mammary tissue by direct extension through the chest wall. This single study should be confirmed before it can be accepted as evidence.

Gerber (1970) reported an association between the presence of asbestosis and neoplasis of the haematopoetic system: two cases of multiple myeloma, two myeloproliferative disorders (one a reticulum cell sarcoma), one Waldenström macroglobulinaemia. The incidence was higher than expected. Older literature

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