another region from the same country in which no concentration of harbours, shipyards, and heavy industry exists. There apparently are regional influences on the possibility of providing evidence of past-occupational exposure. An unexpectedly large number of past occupational exposure in non-typical jobs or in hobbywork was discovered.

In the United Kingdom much work has been done to study past history in mesothelioma cases. In one of the first studies of this kind Newhouse et al (1965) reported that among 76 mesothelioma cases about 12% had domestic exposure (category 2a), and 15% neighbourhood exposure (category 3); no evidence of past asbestos exposure could be found in 33% (see chapter III ad 3). In that country a mesothelioma register has been started (Greenberg et al 1974); among 413 notifications from England, Wales and Scotland over 1967-1968 167 cases were histologically confirmed; of these cases 68% had definite occupational exposure, 7% possible occupational exposure (i.e. 75% category 1), 5% neighbourhood-domestic or hobby exposure (i.e. category 2 + 3), whereas in 15% no past exposure could be detected and in 5% no history could be obtained. The frequency of "true" environmental exposure thus lay between 0 and 15%.

In case-control studies one compares the previous exposure history of mesothelioma cases and of matched controls; also in the last group previous asbestos exposure will be found, e.g. in 10-30%. One should correct the established prevalence of previous exposure in the mesothelioma cases with this percentage, a correction never performed. So, the significance of previous asbestos exposure may be somewhat overestimated: a few of the suggestive asbestos-related mesothelioma cases may in reality not be due to previous asbestos exposure. This does not invalidate the importance of asbestos exposure in relation to mesothelioma, but it may weaken a bit the meaning of the percentages given. A reasonable deduction might be that whereas asbestos was the most important single cause of mesothelioma, the disease also had a "natural" incidence of undetermined causation.

Ashcroft (1973) reported on 35 cases of pleural mesothelioma and 5 cases of peritoneal mesothelioma from the Tyneside region in the UK; 95 percent had definite or probable previous occupational exposure to asbestos, whereas this was the case in only 41% of matched controls; 16 cases of mesothelioma were free from asbestosis; 92% of cases contained coated asbestos fibres in their lungs. The incidence of asbestos bodies in sections from mesothelioma cases was significantly higher than in a series of routine necropsies examined by

R001 0762

PRODUCED BY FORD