

In trying to explain this mysterious epidemic, Wagner,²²⁶ noting that "asbestos bodies" were found in the lungs of some of their patients, obtained detailed life histories of these patients. By 1960, he was able to establish an association with exposure to the Cape of Good Hope asbestos fields, or the industrial use of asbestos, in 32 of 33 patients with histologically proved pleural mesothelioma. The majority of these patients had not actually worked with asbestos but had lived in the vicinity of the mines and mills, and some had left these areas of exposure as young children. The average period between exposure and development of the tumor was 20 to 40 years. By 1962, Wagner²²⁶ had diagnosed a total of 87 pleural and two peritoneal mesotheliomas. In only two cases was it impossible to establish a history of exposure to asbestos dust. Of these 87 cases, 12 had been industrially exposed and the remainder had been environmentally exposed from living in the vicinity of the mills and dumps. This association between mesothelioma and asbestosis became even more intriguing when in 1955, Bonser et al.³⁰ described a series of 72 autopsies on patients with asbestosis in which four cases of peritoneal mesothelioma were found. Subsequently, Mancuso and Coulter¹⁵² found five peritoneal mesotheliomas in 1,495 asbestos workers, and Hourihane,¹⁰² upon reviewing the necropsy files of the London Hospital from 1917 to 1962, found 34 cases of mesothelioma, half of the pleura and the other half of the peritoneum. All

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