CORRESPONDENCE

Study of occupational lung cancer in asbestos factories in China

Editor,—The article by Huilan and Zhiming contains some findings that are difficult to reconcile with our understanding of lung cancer. In table 6, 19 of 57 (33%) of lung cancer cases occurred among non-smokers. This is a very high number considering that in most series less than 10% of cases occur in non-smokers. We also note that the text says, “... 67 lung cancers (including two pleural mesotheliomas) were found.” Why does table 6 only show 57 and not 65 or 67 lung cancers? Table 3 indicates that lung cancer in women is less than half that of the men, although the rates are apparently not adjusted for age or smoking. If asbestos was thought to cause a higher percentage of the lung cancers, male and female rates ought to be closer together.

The finding which most seriously calls into question the results of this study is in table 6, where the lung cancer relative risk for smokers (without asbestos exposure) is only 1.8. The usual relative risks for populations of smokers range from 5 to 25, depending on the amount and years smoked. A study that finds a relative risk this low raises serious questions concerning the credibility of any of the findings.

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Author’s reply

Editor,—It would like to make a brief reply to Morgan and Zhao about their comments on our manuscript.

Firstly, in table 6, 19 of 57 (33%) of lung cancer cases occurred among non-smokers, 15 of whom were exposed to asbestos, so four cases were neither exposed to asbestos nor smoked. Secondly, why does table 6 only show 57 and not 65 or 67 cases of lung cancer? The data given were only from seven factories. In the control groups of the eighth asbestos factory questions were not asked about smoking.

Thirdly, table 3 shows that the incidence of lung cancer in women is less than half that in the men. This is true, and our SMR can be compared with the SMR of lung cancer in the nationwide investigation (1973-75). The SMR of lung cancer for men was 6.26 and 10.47 for women. The data for men and women were statistically significant compared with control data (p<0.01). Table 6 indicates that smoking alone increased the RR of lung cancer only to 1.8. The number is lower than expected, we thought that might be due to a much lower average consumption of cigarettes before 1982 in China than in some western countries.

HUILAN ZHU
Institute of Occupational Medicine, Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine, 29 Nan Wei Road, Beijing, China: The Reference News, 29 May 1992.

NOTICE


With over £13 billion lost through sickness at work, companies need to take a hard look at health care in the workplace. The Wellness Forum was set up in 1992 to do just that and share and develop best practice.

The Forum now has over thirty-five members with hundreds of other organisations and individuals attending events and receiving updates on our work. We sit on the steering group of the Health of the Nation Task Force and run a national competition to find the United Kingdom’s most health conscious company.

We are arranging a seminar later this year and you may wish to note details for your diary/events column.

19 October 1994. Management of musculoskeletal problems in the workplace. During the National Workplace Health and Safety Week (17-21 October) experts from the fields of ergonomics, risk management and physiotherapy will discuss the prevention and management of these problems which cost employers around £650 million a year. The emphasis will be on practical and successful outcomes. The seminar will be held at Imperial College in central London.

Further details from: Paula Feery, Priory House, 8 Battersea Park Road, London SW8 4BC. Telephone: 071-498 3634. Fax: 071-498 3658.

BOOK REVIEWS


The authors intend that this book should serve as a handy reference volume for industrial physicians and nurses. Our main complaint is that the book is not a handy reference volume, and for it to be used regularly would increase user friendliness.

Occupational hearing loss is discussed within this clinical section, but in a separate chapter. The chapter contains some 14 pages. This is short notice for the title material of a refereed volume. Some of the material presented elsewhere could be included here and expanded upon—for example, the electromyography of noise induced hearing loss and the use of audiometry in the medical workplace.

There is much useful information in the second section, although the utility of some of this is diminished by the fact that it concerns American practice. For example, there is a good section on prevention of hearing injury in industry that could find a wider readership if there was less emphasis on the American aspect

As a reference for the diagnosis of noise-induced hearing loss, and for some aspects of hearing conservation this book (apart from the criticisms concerning layout) is excellent. Readership should include those in the legal profession who deal with claims for noise induced hearing loss, for example. It will also be a useful book to those in the occupational physician. But there is still a niche in the market for a substantive text that deals primarily with the practical problems of hearing loss in the workplace.

DAVID MCBRIDE
Correspondence Book review Notices - Journal of Clinical Pathology. determine the areas for which microbiology advice was between medical microbiologists and clinicians in a shown. The brief text is complemented by as. Page 1 Aceng Ruyani (Correspondence) [email protected] Page 1 BOOK NOTICES 419 evidence that a nearly universal nate objects by Asya PERELTSAIG. Efforts dedicated to elucidating the properties of the syntax/semantics interface are well-represented.