

Mesothelioma

Mesothelioma is a cancer of the delicate pleural membrane which surrounds the lung. The best known cause of this type of cancer is exposure to asbestos.

The asbestos fibres deposit in the pleura and cause irritation, which over many years leads to the development in cancer in some, but certainly not all cases. The likelihood of cancer developing is increased if there has been a heavy exposure to asbestos and if the patient is a cigarette smoker. Also, some types of asbestos are more dangerous than others.

The cancer may be called 'aggressive' because it is not possible to remove it by an operation and it steadily progresses in all cases. However the speed with which the cancer progresses is very variable and can sometimes be slow.

The cancer cannot be completely removed by an operation, so treatment is either chemotherapy or radiotherapy. Neither of these treatments is very successful. Mesothelioma does not respond well to chemotherapy or radiotherapy; however, radiotherapy can be used effectively to relieve the pain which can be caused by the cancer. Because this type of treatment is aimed at relieving a symptom rather than curing the cancer, it is referred to as palliative.

The British Lung Foundation

Advice, support and information

- Mesothelioma UK is based at the National Macmillan Mesothelioma Resource Centre and provides informational and support for patients, carers and health professionals.

www.mesothelioma.uk.com

Free Phone Helpline 0800 169 2409

- Asbestos Forum is an organisation which campaigns for patients with Asbestos related disease including mesothelioma

www.asbestosforum.org

Tel 0161 953 4037