

Title:

How do you treat pericardial mesothelioma ?

Word Count:

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Summary:

Learn about the different treatment options for pericardial mesothelioma.

Keywords:

pericardial mesothelioma

Article Body:

Of all the cancers caused by asbestos dust (mesothelioma), pericardial mesothelioma is the most rare, accounting for a fraction of all cases (5%). It is a cancer that grows on the pericardium (the lining of the heart). This is a delicate 'film', and any infection on the pericardium can have deadly consequences.

Once an individual has been diagnosed with pericardial mesothelioma they are offered three different treatment options. These are radiation, surgery and chemotherapy. Pericardial mesothelioma is extremely difficult to treat (due to the intricacies involved in removing the tumours from the pericardium), and a patient's chances of survival are slim. All three methods have a poor success rate mainly due to the fact that pericardial mesothelioma is detected in the mature stages of development. (The reason for this is because in the early stages of the cancer the symptoms resemble those of diseases such as pneumonia). The prognosis for a patient undergoing treatment at this point (mature stage) is usually less than a year.

Before treatment, the patient requires a doctor's evaluation in order to determine which of the three treatments are suitable for him/her. Details such as age, weight, medical history, and general well-being are considered prior to the commencement of treatment. So, how do you treat pericardial mesothelioma ?

Radiation - As with all cancer treatments that use this method, large doses of radiation are used to kill the cancerous cells on the pericardium. The downside to radiation treatment is that not only are you killing off the cancerous cells, but you are also damaging the vital organs in close proximity to the heart, namely the lungs. The heart also gets damaged (due to the large doses of radiation).

Surgery - We can break this down into two parts; aggressive surgery and palliative procedures. Aggressive surgery involves the removal of the cancerous cell. Since these are very close to the heart and lungs, this makes it an extremely precarious procedure and one that requires an extremely skilled surgeon.

Palliative procedures are used in the latest of stages of pericardial mesothelioma and serve the sole purpose of reducing the symptoms. Usually at this stage the cancer is practically incurable.

Chemotherapy - This is the most widely-used of cancer therapies which involves the use of drugs to kill the cancerous cells. Unfortunately, the majority of drugs used have a low success rate with pericardial mesothelioma. Research is being conducted to come up with a cocktail of drugs that have a more favourable outcome.

There does exist another form of treatment which involves using all three aforementioned treatment options. It is known as Dual Therapy. Surgery is used to remove the cancerous cells, then chemotherapy and radiation are used to kill the remaining cells. The success rate for this method is higher than just using radiation, surgery or chemotherapy alone, but can still be dangerous.