

Title:

Pericardial Mesothelioma

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Summary:

Pericardial mesothelioma is a rare form of mesothelioma that accounts for roughly 5% of all mesothelioma cases. Pericardial mesothelioma is a cancer that grows on the lining of the heart.

Keywords:

mesothelioma, cancer, asbestos, pericardial, peritoneal, pleural, malignant, symptoms, treatment

Article Body:

Pericardial mesothelioma is a rare form of mesothelioma that accounts for roughly 5% of all mesothelioma cases. Pericardial mesothelioma is a cancer that grows on the lining of the heart. The lining of the heart is extremely important because it plays an important role in protecting the heart from damage and so pericardial mesothelioma is an extremely serious condition. Pericardial mesothelioma becomes a terminal illness if not treated aggressively in its early stages.

Like all other forms of mesothelioma, pericardial mesothelioma is caused by inhalation of asbestos dust and fibres. Once inhaled, asbestos fibres become lodged in the lungs. From the lungs, the fibres can either pass into the lymphatic system and then be transported to the lining of the lungs or they can gradually move across to the lining of the heart over a long period of time. Over a long period of time, asbestos fibres can accumulate on the lining of the heart and this is when pericardial mesothelioma becomes a likelihood. Due to the fact that asbestos is still present in many public buildings, the possibility of pericardial mesothelioma is a reality for everyone, although for most, very unlikely. Those with the highest chance of having mesothelioma are those who have been in constant contact with mesothelioma for a length of time as short as a few months. These are people like construction workers and asbestos manufacturers. Those who are in contact with people who are constantly exposed to asbestos are also at risk due to the fact that asbestos fibres can stick to clothes and hair and so can be carried around.

Presently, cases of mesothelioma are increasing including pericardial

mesothelioma. Elderly men who are approaching 60 - 70 years of age are just starting to suffer from pericardial mesothelioma due to its long latency period (amount of time the symptoms take to show) of 30 - 50 years. They are suffering because this was the generation who worked with asbestos and amongst asbestos when asbestos was an extremely popular building material in the 1950s - 1970s. These men are now lodging multi-million dollar lawsuits against the companies who exposed them to the dangers of asbestos.

Pericardial mesothelioma has a number of symptoms but these only start to take effect in the cancer's latest stages when it is almost fully matured and developed. These symptoms include persistent coughing, shortness of breath, chest pains and palpitations. Other symptoms typical of all types of mesothelioma include loss of appetite, nausea and weight loss. What often makes pericardial mesothelioma so difficult to treat is that its symptoms are typical of many other more common diseases such as pneumonia. To be treated effectively, pericardial mesothelioma needs to be treated aggressively in its early stages and so many patients' treatments are given too late because of a delay in diagnosis.

Treatments for pericardial mesothelioma are very limited and as yet, success rates for curing pericardial mesothelioma are very low. The chances of a patient's survival depend largely on how early the cancer is treated and how aggressively. Treatment methods include chemotherapy, radiation therapy, dual therapy and surgery. Chemotherapy uses drugs to try to kill off cancerous cells. Radiation therapy uses radiation to try to kill off cancerous cells although this is extremely difficult in the case of pericardial mesothelioma because too much radiation can badly damage the heart. Dual therapy is a combination of both chemotherapy and radiation therapy. Surgery comes in two different types, aggressive surgery and palliative procedures. Aggressive surgery is only used on the strongest of patients such as young and healthy men and consists of removing a large portion of the cancer and attempts to gain control over the cancer. Palliative procedures are a more passive way of dealing with pericardial mesothelioma and just attempts to relieve the patient of the symptoms.

Research is being done into pericardial mesothelioma in research stations all over the USA and many pharmaceutical companies are also attempting to find new drugs for chemotherapy. So far, much research has been unsuccessful.