

Title:

Mesothelioma treatments: What are my options?

Word Count:

520

Summary:

This article gives the opinions that Robert Linebaugh has on the different treatments for mesothelioma.

Keywords:

mesothelioma, treatment, information, cancer, asbestos, lung

Article Body:

Clinical research to treat malignant mesothelioma is very active and although no treatment has yet proved entirely successful, there exist a range of treatments available to individuals diagnosed with the disease. There are three types of standard treatments used to treat malignant mesothelioma which include: surgery, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy.

Surgery

Surgery for malignant mesothelioma is divided into a number of sub-classes, which are specially designed to limit the disease for individuals with particular strains of the disease.

Extrapleural pneumonectomy is a severe form of surgery in which the entire lung and a portion of the lining of the chest, the diaphragm, and some or the entire sac which surrounds the heart is removed.

Wide local excision is a form of surgery which targets and removes the cancer and a limited amount of the healthy tissue surrounding the cancerous region.

Pleurectomy and decortication removes part of the covering of the lungs, as well as the lining of the chest and portions of the outside covering of the lungs.

The surgical procedure pleurodesis is a distinct technique insofar as it employs a blend of chemicals and/or drugs to create an intentional scar between the layers of the pleura. Post surgery, the space created by the scar must be drained, using either a catheter or chest tube, and is then filled with a chemical which inhibits the accumulation of fluid in the pleura cavity.

Radiation

The second primary medical technique used to fight the development of malignant mesothelioma is radiation. Radiation therapy, as applied to malignant mesothelioma uses the same basic technology as other forms of medical radiation insofar as the technique employs high energy x-rays to kill cancer cells. The process is divided into two broad categories:

External radiation therapy is a technique in which a machine sends radiation in a targeted stream at a certain portion of the body, and in so doing it kills the cancerous cells in its purview.

Internal radiation therapy, by contrast, uses not an external machine, but rather needles, seeds and catheters to place radioactive substance directly on or near the cancer. While the precise method of implementation will of course depend upon the type and stage of the illness, what is constant within this category is that the goal is to get the radiation placed directly onto the cancerous area and in so doing provide a more concentrated and directed dosage.

Chemotherapy

The third standard malignant mesothelioma treatment is Chemotherapy.

Chemotherapy uses drugs which target cancer cells and stop them from dividing and thus prevent their growth.

In systemic chemotherapy, the drug can be taken by mouth or injected, but either way the goal is to have it reach cancer cells by means of the body's own blood circulation system. In regional chemotherapy, the drug is placed directly onto the target area. And finally, combination chemotherapy involves the use of two or more anticancer drugs which can be administered either orally or through injection.

Malignant mesothelioma is a difficult disease for anyone to bear, however, educating oneself as to the options available is an important step for making the process more manageable.