Ampullary cancer in chemical workers

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Although a relatively uncommon neoplasm, cancer of the ampulla of Vater does account for over 300 deaths a year in the United States. Among biliary tract tumours, ampullary cancer is regarded as having a favourable prognosis because the early onset of symptoms, low grade histopathology, and late and infrequent metastases allow the possibility of surgical cure; nevertheless, high operative mortality and overall five year survival figures of between 4% and 40%, depending on type of tumour and disease spread at diagnosis, show that these cancers cannot be considered as having a good prognosis. These figures also serve to underline the importance of the identification of underlying aetiological factors for these tumours. In previous research we had identified the possible importance of chemical exposures in the development of these tumours; however, statistical significance was limited by the small numbers involved. Expansion of these studies has now confirmed our previous predictions.

Materials and methods

Information data files on causes of mortality among chemical workers were described previously and have now been expanded as described elsewhere. Cases of biliary cancer were segregated out by site specific categories—for example, gall bladder, extrahepatic bile ducts, intrahepatic bile ducts, and ampulla of Vater. Fifty cases of biliary cancer (11 of which were ampullary) were identified in this expanded mortality data base. An adjusted proportional mortality ratio (PMR) analysis was performed on the combined cases by dividing the number of deaths observed in each category by the number expected based on the proportion of deaths in this category in the United States general population and multiplying by 100. The statistical significance was tested using Fisher’s exact test and statistical significance was assumed for p values of less than 0.05.

Results and comments

We have previously reported raised PMR for ampu-
chemicals that might be involved in the hope of preventing future cases.

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References


Frank, Fallon

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