Correspondence

Investing dose response relations in occupational mortality studies: something to keep in mind

Sir,—In their recent article (1987;44:642–4) Swaen and Volovics discuss the correct method for calculating person-years when a dose response relation is examined. They explain that when exposure is measured by an amount of time in a particular environment, care is needed in attributing the person-years to correct levels.

Two points may be worth making. Firstly, it should be noted that this issue was raised with some cogency in correspondence in the Lancet over ten years ago in relation to a study of vinyl chloride monomer and mortality. The original authors1,2 did not use a correct method and showed a spurious inverse trend in mortality with increasing exposure. Their error was pointed out by others.3,5 The debate forms a useful demonstration of the implications of the right and wrong approaches.

Secondly, the need for appropriate allocation of the person-years may be seen clearly by analogy with age. If a worker is followed up for 40 years, from age 30 to age 69, it must be obvious that in calculating a standardised mortality ratio one should not allocate 40 years to the 65–69 years category. To do so, however, would involve the same error as allocating the entire person-years of experience of a worker with 10 or more years of exposure to the 10+ category.

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References

Anyone for teno?

Sir,—I agree that tenosynovitis is an important problem in industry (1987;44:793–4). I have a comment on the treatment of “real” tenosynovitis. We have used heparin 5000 IU three to four times daily for four to five days with excellent results. The concentrated solution (25 000 IU/ml) should be used and given by deep intramuscular injection. This treatment is well known in sports medicine.

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Book reviews


This text is one for the diagnostic pathologist being of a taxonomic and catalogic nature. The 325 or so pages review the tumours found in the rat, organ by organ, each chapter written by a different author and each beginning with a brief description of normal histological structure. It is a compilation of facts with little interpretation of the subject and carries a fairly extensive and useful reference list with each description, although these are dated as there is little reference to any work in the 1980s. Some reference to human tumours is made in each section, albeit briefly but nevertheless usefully. The text does not comment on aspects of cell line culturing or other more experimental studies; readers must turn to other sources for these. This absence perhaps is a reflection of the dated nature of the work covered by this volume.

The photographic illustrations, although quite numerous, are only of medium quality with the higher power pictures at times very poor. Thus the diagnostician is left somewhat wanting in trying to compare his or her unknown sample with the examples in this book. The lack of an index is frustrating.

Despite the above reservations the aim of attempting to standardise the nomenclature and classification that this book sets out to achieve (as stated in the preface) is a noble and useful one. Those engaged in the routine diagnosis of laboratory animal tissues will find it useful to have this volume on his or her shelf.

C Mackenzie


As the preface states this book takes a healthy new approach to this subject by treating the mesothelium as an organ in its own right, thereby concentrating
information that hitherto has been disseminated through the general pathology literature. It is a welcome addition to the pathologist's library.

It is a specialist book, which is written by four authors, of high quality but is perhaps more useful to students and the interested research pathologist than to the diagnostic pathologist; nevertheless, it is recommended as a useful addition to the latter group's reading list. It presents useful background information on the embryology and normal physiology of the mesothelial tissues, discusses the production of effusions, and then devotes most of the text to the pathology of anatomical groups of mesothelia—that is, pleura, pericardia, peritoneum, etc.

The illustrations are of a refreshingly high quality both photographically and in line drawings; the book contains many macro, histological, and electron microscopical illustrations. For the diagnostic pathologist, however, there are perhaps not enough reference photographs for his or her specific comparative purposes. It is well referenced and this makes it a valuable adjunct to researchers; references include those from 1986.

 Infective and neoplastic conditions are covered adequately, and there is a very adequate section devoted to pathology of industrial origins. The book is well indexed and is presented in a pleasing manner.

A shortcoming of this otherwise good book is that it does not pay enough attention to experimental or veterinary conditions as it only mentions these in passing. Parasitic conditions affecting mesothelial tissues, such as the helminths, which cause a considerable amount of morbidity in the developing areas of the world are not covered. For example, the section on hydrocoele does not mention filariasis, a major cause of hydrocoele in global terms.

This book is recommended to all pathologists who wish to revise or improve their knowledge of this major component of the body through reading an informative collection of most of what is known about the subject.

C MACKENZIE

Notices


The Conference includes technical sessions and exhibits on numerous occupational safety and health issues of importance in today's changing industrial hygiene field. Also the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) is celebrating their 50th year anniversary at this meeting. Numerous items at the meeting will commemorate this 50 years of service to the industrial hygiene community. The theme at the conference will be “Fifty years growing as a profession.” Contact: American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) HQ, (216) 762–7294.

Fundamentals of industrial hygiene, Boston, 13–17 June, 1988

Designed for chemists, engineers, industrial hygienists, managers, and others requiring a basic understanding of the principles of occupational health and safety, this course will emphasize identification of industrial processes associated with health hazards and the control methods that may be applied to reduce worker risk. Course sessions will provide an understanding of the physiological and toxicological effects of uncontrolled exposure to chemical, mineral, metallic, and physical stresses in the workplace and will define the concept of safe limits. Fee: $850.00. For further information, contact: Office of Continuing Education, Harvard School of Public Health, 677 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115, (617) 732–1171.

Elmia Ergonomics 89. International Trade Fair and Conference on Safety and Health at Work, Jönköping, Sweden, 3–6 October 1989

The Elmia Ergonomics Trade Fair on Safety and Health at Work is Scandinavia's only comprehensive exhibition dealing with the working environment, and seeks to illustrate how good working environments may be created both from ergonomics as well as safety aspects. Elmia Ergonomics 89 will be a forum for debate and the exchange of experience, which will certainly influence work on the design of future Swedish working environments. The conference will also be an important step in the efforts to integrate and standardize regulations applied throughout Europe. For further information please contact Elmia Ergonomics 89, Box 6066, S-550 06 Jönköping, Sweden.