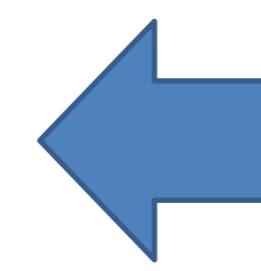


The Changing Mesothelioma Patient Profile: implications for clinical practice and nursing care

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Asbestos remains a public health risk. The type of occupational and environmental exposure to asbestos is changing over time. A recent UK report¹ and UK parliamentary review² highlight concerns about risk of asbestos exposure in living, educational and working environments. Those who develop mesothelioma in supposedly low-risk environments are likely to have different information, care and support needs to those who have worked in industries known to be high risk.

This poster draws on four research studies, each providing insights into the experiences of patients exposed to asbestos in what is considered a low-risk environment. Health care professionals should be aware of the changing patient profile so that patients can be diagnosed and supported in an appropriate and timely way that addresses inequalities in care. Further information and resources to support health care professionals can be viewed from the QR codes below:

Mesothelioma Asbestos Guidelines Study (MAGS)

- a qualitative study exploring experiences of patients exposed to asbestos during work in a health care setting.
- Rapid review, Freedom of Information Requests, interviews (n=7 health care professionals with mesothelioma, n=2 family members of health care professionals with mesothelioma)



Mesothelioma and Education Workers Study (MEWS)

- A review of the experiences of school-based education workers with mesothelioma following exposure to asbestos in school buildings.
- A review of academic and grey literature, stakeholder consultation, collation of national data to understand incidence of mesothelioma amongst education workers.



Gendered Experience of Mesothelioma Study (GEMS)

- A mixed methods study exploring similarities and differences in the experiences of men and women with mesothelioma.
- Analysis of national data: Mesothelioma Outcomes, Research Experience (MORE) survey and dataset collated by HASAG Asbestos Disease Support.
- Interviews with 11 women and 14 men (N=24)



Military Experience of Mesothelioma Study (MiMES)

- A mixed methods study exploring the veteran experience of living with mesothelioma.
- Analysis of national data: number of claims to the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, the Supporting Our Armed Forces database and the Mesothelioma Outcomes, Research Experience (MORE) survey.
- Interviews with 13 veterans, 10 family members and 8 professionals. (N=31)



Key findings and implications for practice

Assumptions regarding asbestos risk can cause a low index of suspicion and delays in diagnosis for people with non-traditional exposure.

- Increase awareness of asbestos risk in non-traditional occupations and environments
- Always record a patient's occupational history with as much detail and accuracy as possible
- Do not assume that asbestos exposure for women is para occupational (second-hand exposure)
- Do not assume that people will be aware of their exposure to asbestos.

It can be challenging for some patients to recall their exposure if known e.g. if exposed during combat in the Armed Forces. The source of exposure can evoke feelings of distress for patients and concern for others e.g. for school children if exposed in a school.

- Inform patients and their families in advance of taking an occupational history that this will be very detailed
- Be sensitive when taking an occupational history and mindful that discussing exposure may be difficult for patients

Distress and shock at diagnosis can be accentuated for those exposed to asbestos in what is considered a low-risk environment. Support needs can differ between men, women and occupation type, including psychological and emotional needs. Interaction with clinical teams was particularly complex for health care professionals with mesothelioma as they were being treated and cared for by their peers.

- Provide a range of options so that people can access the support that they consider appropriate. This may include single-sex support.

You are not expected to know everything. Contact Mesothelioma UK (if you're based in the UK) or your local trusted organisation for guidance if you are unsure how to provide the best possible care and support for a patient and their family.

¹ Asbestos Testing and Consultancy & National Organisation of Asbestos Consultants (2022). The first annual data analysis report into asbestos in UK buildings

² House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee, 2022. The Health and Safety Executive's approach to asbestos management

