

Lung Disease

JCMcDonald et al. Chest Feb (2001) Vol. 119 #2 p. 428.

A study of Cryptogenic Fibrosing Alveolitis (CFA), does it have an occupational cause?

Death certificates for England and Wales 1981 – 1990 were analysed for records of CFA (ICD-9 code 516.3) as the underlying cause of death.

In all 5,941 cases were identified and then classified according to the usual occupation section on the certificate. 61 % of these cases were men.

Mean age of death 71. 95% were aged over 55. (Given the age group and the male/female ratio it would seem plausible to suspect an occupational cause.)

Raised SMR (significant) found for coal miners (145 95% CI 114,185), electrical and electronic (146 95% CI 116,184) and host of others with very small numbers of cases.

Comment

Pathologically similar to asbestosis.

The two strongest associations (coal miners and electrical) would not appear to have much in common and are not significant enough to establish an occupational cause (on the balance of probabilities).

Death certificates may not be all that reliable for occupational information.

