

*Y Lacasse et al. Scand J Work Environ Health (2005) Vol.31(6) p 450 – 458*

**Meta-analysis of silicosis and lung cancer**

This report suggests that silicosis is related to the risk of lung cancer even among non-smokers.

The relationship between silica silicosis smoking and lung cancer remains uncertain. Very rarely are all the relevant exposures measured in a cohort study. When they are, the numbers of fully characterised members of the cohort may be too small to draw firm conclusions.

Meta analysis pools the results from separate studies in order to increase statistical power.

Twenty seven cohort studies of silicosis and lung cancer were identified as suitable for combination into a meta analysis. After making an adjustment for the effects of smoking, the overall standardised mortality ratio (SMR) for silicotics to die from lung cancer was 1.6 (95% CI = 1.3 to 1.9).

**Comment**

Risk of lung cancer appears to be increased for people with silicosis even if they don't smoke. However, it is not possible to determine whether it is the silica or the silicosis which increases the risk of lung cancer. In general it has been found that the more severe the silicosis the higher the risk of lung cancer.

This study seems to confirm the general drift of findings but adds some value in its treatment of smoking as a confounding factor.

