

# Malignant mesothelioma of the pleura among seafarers

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## KEY WORDS

Mesothelioma; pleura; asbestos; seafarers; merchant marine; latency periods

## SUMMARY

**Background:** *A large amount of data indicates that seafarers are at risk for asbestos disease. Objectives:* *To trace the outlines of pleural mesothelioma among seafarers. Methods:* *Pleural mesotheliomas diagnosed among seamen in the Trieste-Monfalcone area, Italy, in the period 1973-2003, were reviewed. Results:* *The series comprised 50 men aged between 53 and 91 years (mean age 75.7 years). The diagnosis of mesothelioma was confirmed by necropsy in 38 cases. The patients had served in the Italian Navy (24 persons), in the merchant navy (17 persons), or in both (9 persons). The trades were various including engine room as well as deck personnel. Asbestos bodies were detected on routine lung sections in 55% of the necropsy cases. Asbestos bodies isolated from the lungs in three cases ranged between 2,100 and 7,000 bodies per gram of dried tissue. Latency periods ranged between 33 and 72 years (mean 56.1 years). Conclusions:* *When compared with shipyard workers, the seamen with mesothelioma show signs of less intense exposure to asbestos, and longer latency periods. Mesothelioma in seamen should be considered as an occupational disease.*