

## CHANGING TRENDS IN MESOTHELIOMA INCIDENCE

Hans Weill

We have recently reported the temporal pattern and change in trend of mesothelioma incidence in the United States since 1973. The Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) program of the National Cancer Institute has since 1973 provided annual age adjusted incidence for mesothelioma in representative cancer registries dispersed throughout the US. SEER data were analyzed to describe the trend of male mesothelioma incidence, data which indicated that after two decades of increasing incidence, a likely decline has been observed since the early 1990s, when a highly significant change in the upward course occurred. These US trends will be compared with recent trends reported from Australia, Europe and the United Kingdom.

We concluded that increasing US male mesothelioma incidence for many years was undoubtedly the result of exposure to asbestos. The high mesothelioma risk was prominently influenced by exposure to amphibole asbestos (crocidolite and amosite), which reached its peak usage in the 1960s and thereafter declined. A differing pattern in some other countries (continuing rise in incidence) may be related to their greater and later amphibole use, particularly crocidolite. The known latency period for the development of this tumor provides biological plausibility for the recent decline in mesothelioma incidence in the USA. This favorable finding is contrary to a widespread fear that asbestos related health effects will show an inevitable increase in coming years, or even decades.