POSSIBLE OCCUPATIONAL LUNG CANCER IN NEPAL

Dear Editor,

The article "Possible Occupational Lung Cancer in Nepal" by Joshi SK, Moen BE and Bratveit M is informative and probably first of this kind in our country. The authors have rightly pointed out that exact prevalence of occupational cancers is not known because of limitations in our current knowledge about the magnitude, duration and distribution in the population of the exposures to specific carcinogens.¹

I think following points need to be considered while interpreting the result.

- The role of indoor pollution especially incomplete combustion of wood, dung and crop residues for domestic energy put the housewives at risk of respiratory problems- COPD, lung cancers etc.² It might have led into bias on risk estimation as they are categorised as non-exposed group.
- Though environment has little to play in the pathogenesis of colon cancer, the mean age of onset is lower and it is commoner in upper socioeconomic group. Hence choice of reference group is not uncontroversial.
- It would have been better if duration of exposure and histological types of lung cancers were specified.

No doubt the study has opened a trend that needs to be continued to identify the population at risk due to occupational exposures in our country particularly agricultural workers who have increased risk of various malignancies including leukemia, lymphoma, multiple myeloma and cancers of stomach, brain and connective tissue due to various agricultural chemicals^{3,4} because diagnosis of malignancies left little to be done. All of us know that identification of particular agent (or chemicals) helps to set primary preventive strategies or removal of the patient from harmful environment is the only intervention that is possible.

Dr. Shital Adhikari

Gorkha

Email: shtl123@yahoo.com

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