Update for stakeholders on the MAGS project: 31/08/2019

As you know, the project is looking for the experiences of presentation, diagnosis, treatment and care for health care workers with mesothelioma. It comes in three phases.

1) A review of the literature and other sources published on the topic. The searching is now pretty much complete. I've looked through a lot of articles. There’s quite a few that talk about the experience of mesothelioma for patients in general but very few on the specific topic of healthcare workers (1–3). There is some good material available from newspapers, blogs and YouTube broadcasts which you might have seen (4–8). Anyway, the list I have is below so if you have any more please get back to me. I’ll now be going through that literature and other material looking for specific themes. Obviously, the material on the experience for patients in general with mesothelioma will be relevant as healthcare workers are likely to have some similar experiences; but I’m also interested in specific issues for healthcare workers.

I’ve also been looking at material that might give an idea of the extent of the mesothelioma in health care workers. At the moment the data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) on deaths from mesothelioma based on occupation does have a breakdown by some of the NHS occupations, such as doctors and nurses, but doesn’t have anything on ancillary workers e.g. cleaners and porters. The ONS say [on page 3 of 13]: (9)

“Recent research suggests that, while still caused by asbestos, a majority of currently occurring mesotheliomas among women (and a similar absolute number among men, though these constitute a smaller proportion of the larger male total) are not attributable to occupational or domestic asbestos exposures. Such deaths are therefore likely to be attributed to other sources of “environmental” asbestos exposure. [...] Environmental exposures will include any exposure accrued indirectly during working hours, but the extent of this effect is not quantifiable.”

The data available from the ONS therefore suggests that many of mesothelioma deaths in women will be a reflection of “environmental” rather than occupational asbestos exposure, in particular, from direct handling of asbestos at work.
The ONS numbers of mesothelioma deaths in healthcare workers look to me to be a bit on the low side. I have sent off a Freedom of Information request to the NHS asking for the number of legal cases they’ve had regarding mesothelioma and I’ll get back to you when I hear from them.

2) Discussions with stakeholders. This is ongoing and I have had some useful information and interesting discussions with a number of people. If you have not heard from me yet, you will do in time unless you get back to me saying you don’t want me to be in touch.

3) Interviews with healthcare workers diagnosed with mesothelioma. The proposal needs ethics approval before I can start these interviews. The proposal has been reviewed but I have been asked to clarify a few points, which I have done. I have resubmitted the proposal and should get approval, I hope within the next two weeks. We aim to start recruitment in October although there are a couple of interviews I can hopefully do before then.

Thank you for your interest in the project and feel free to contact me. The best email contact is

peterallmark@gmail.com

References

4. Portman M. YouTube: Dr Mags Portman on living with mesothelioma and the importance of research. [Internet]. 2018 [cited 2019 Aug 18]. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_6SGJzh2x4