

Occupational exposures in rare cancers: A critical review of the literature[☆]

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Contents

1. Introduction	101
2. Methods	101
3. Results	101
3.1. Head and neck cancers	101
3.1.1. Epithelial tumors of the nasal cavity and sinuses*	101
3.1.2. Epithelial tumors of the nasopharynx*	101
3.1.3. Epithelial tumors of the major salivary glands**	101
3.1.4. Epithelial tumors of the hypopharynx*	101
3.1.5. Epithelial tumors of the larynx*	119
3.1.6. Epithelial tumors of the oropharynx**	122
3.1.7. Epithelial tumors of the oral** cavity and lip*	122
3.2. Gastrointestinal cancers	122
3.2.1. Squamous cell carcinoma and adenocarcinoma of the esophagus**	122
3.2.2. Carcinoma of the small intestine**	122
3.2.3. Epithelial tumors of the anal canal	123
3.2.4. Hepatocellular carcinoma of the liver and intrahepatic bile tract (IBT)*	123
3.2.5. Epithelial tumors of gallbladder and extrahepatic biliary tract (EBT)**	123
3.3. Thoracic cancers	123
3.3.1. Epithelial tumor of the trachea	123
3.3.2. Large cell lung carcinoma*	123
3.3.3. Bronchioloalveolar carcinoma of the lung	123
3.3.4. Epithelial tumors of the thymus	123
3.3.5. Mesothelioma*	123
3.4. Reproductive cancers	123
3.4.1. Mammary Paget's disease of the breast	123
3.4.2. Epithelial tumors of the male breast**	123
3.4.3. Epithelial tumors of the cervix uteri**	123
3.4.4. Adenocarcinoma of the ovary*	124
3.4.5. Epithelial tumors of the vulva and vagina	124
3.5. Urogenital cancers	124
3.5.1. Testicular cancer**	124
3.5.2. Extragonadal germ cell tumors	124

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3.5.3.	Epithelial tumors of the penis	124
3.5.4.	Squamous cell carcinoma of the kidney	124
3.5.5.	Non-transitional cell carcinoma of the urinary bladder	124
3.5.6.	Non-bladder urinary organs (renal pelvis, ureter, and urethra)*	124
3.6.	Neuroectodermic and mesodermic tumors	124
3.6.1.	Malignant melanoma of the mucosa	124
3.6.2.	Epithelial tumors of the eye and adnexa*	124
3.6.3.	Malignant melanoma of the uvea*	124
3.6.4.	Soft-tissue sarcoma (STS)*	124
3.6.5.	Bone sarcoma*	124
3.6.6.	Glial tumors of the central nervous system**	125
3.6.7.	Malignant meningioma**	125
3.7.	Neuroendocrine tumors	125
3.8.	Endocrine tumors	125
3.8.1.	Carcinomas of the pituitary gland	125
3.8.2.	Carcinomas of the thyroid gland**	125
3.8.3.	Carcinomas of the parathyroid gland	125
3.8.4.	Carcinomas of the adrenal gland	125
3.9.	Lymphoid diseases	125
3.9.1.	Hodgkin disease (HD)**	125
3.9.2.	Acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL)*	125
3.9.3.	Burkitt leukemia/lymphoma	125
3.9.4.	Cutaneous T cell lymphoma/mycosis fungoides**	125
3.9.5.	Other T cell lymphomas and NK cell neoplasms**	125
3.9.6.	Diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLCL)* and follicular B lymphoma (FL)*	125
3.9.7.	Hairy cell leukemia (HCL)**	126
3.9.8.	Multiple myeloma (MM)*	126
3.9.9.	Other non-Hodgkin, mature B cell lymphoma	126
3.10.	Acute myeloid leukemia (AML)*	126
3.11.	Myeloproliferative neoplasms	126
3.11.1.	Chronic myeloid leukemia*	126
3.11.2.	Other myeloproliferative and myelodysplastic neoplasms**	126
3.12.	Histiocytic and dendritic cell neoplasms	126
3.13.	Childhood cancer	127
3.13.1.	Childhood leukemia (CL)*	127
3.13.2.	Lymphoma*	127
3.13.3.	Childhood brain tumors (CBT)*	127
3.13.4.	Neuroblastoma**	127
3.13.5.	Ewing sarcoma*	127
3.13.6.	Wilms' tumor**	127
3.13.7.	Other childhood cancer**	127
4.	Discussion	127
	Conflict of interest statement	129
	Role of the funding source	129
	Reviewers	129
	References	129
	Biographies	134

Abstract

The contribution of occupational exposures to rare cancers, which represent 22% of all cancers diagnosed annually in Europe, remains insufficiently considered. We conducted a comprehensive review of occupational risk factors in 67 rare cancers (annual incidence <6/100,000). An examination of relevant articles in PubMed (1960–2012) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) monographs revealed that 26 cancer sites, such as mesothelioma, nasal, larynx, liver, ovarian cancer, bone sarcoma, and hematopoietic malignancies were consistently linked to occupational factors. Main exposures included asbestos, wood dust, metals/metalloids, formaldehyde, benzene, vinyl chloride, and radiation. There was inconsistent evidence regarding 22 rare malignancies. We did not identify relevant data for 19 rare cancers. Despite limitations of published evidence, our review provides useful information that can facilitate the identification of work-related factors that contribute to rare cancers. International collaborations, development of improved exposure assessment methods, and molecular approaches can improve future studies.

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