

# Mesothelioma Treatment

Contributed by Stuart Livesey  
Saturday, 08 July 2006  
Last Updated Sunday, 30 July 2006

Mesothelioma causes what is known as pleural effusion, that is just a very fancy medical term for a build up of fluid between the covering of the chest wall and diaphragm and the covering of the lungs.

Under normal circumstances both these coverings are coated with mesothelial cells that produce a small amount of fluid to lubricate the two coatings so that they can move against each other without difficulty. Any excess fluid is absorbed by blood and lymph vessels. When Mesothelioma springs to life too much fluid is produced, it can't be absorbed and the result is an effusion.

Other forms of pleural effusion are caused by infection or heart failure can be treated with medication but unfortunately that does not seem to be the case if the cause is Mesothelioma.

Treatment for this form of pleural effusion usually consists of draining the chest cavity and introducing talc to completely cover all surfaces in the pleural space and inhibit the production of any more fluid.

Unfortunately there is no cure for Mesothelioma but early diagnosis can certainly lead a longer life expectancy for people afflicted with this disease. At the moment most sufferers are told that they are unlikely to survive longer than eight to twelve months but if the diagnosis is made early enough there are some medical centres that are reporting a five year survival rate of up to 40%.

Currently there are three traditional kinds of treatment for Mesothelioma. There is surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy and often a treatment regime consists of a combination of two or more of these.

Surgery is largely ineffective and often goes no further than what was mentioned above. Chemotherapy is an option for those who are not considered to be surgical candidates and Alimata, a drug recently approved by the Food and Drug Administration in the United States holds out some hope of slowing and perhaps even halting the growth of the disease.

Radiation therapy is another tool in the treatment of Mesothelioma. Even though it is considered to be a rather aggressive approach radiation, used palliatively, has helped to control the spread of the tumour.

New forms of treatment for Mesothelioma are constantly being developed and tested and what is current this week may certainly be superseded by next week. However, the medical profession is still mainly restricted to the basic forms of therapy mentioned above. Although there are some experiments currently proceeding that combine drugs with light to kill of the malignant cells.

Other experiments are being conducted with a view to using biological therapy &ndash; otherwise known as Immunotherapy. This form of therapy is used to stimulate a body's own immune system to protect itself against the disease.

And there are many other forms of therapy that are being considered and tested. While a diagnosis of Mesothelioma currently leaves the future looking bleak for a patient there is still hope that a successful form of treatment will soon be found.