

## How Many treatments are currently being used for victims of asbestos diseases?

Mesothelioma is touted as deadly because most of the cases are diagnosed when in advanced stage and doctors have little solace to offer by then. Still doctors try to do their best to relieve the patients from severe pain of mesothelioma using advanced treatments. **Surgery** Before considering surgery as one of the propositions for the treatment of malignant cancer, the health of the patient needs to be carefully evaluated. The tests are performed to check whether the cancer has spread to other parts of the body or not. Also evaluation of the patient's lung and heart functions is done. In case of the former, a mesothelioma surgery cannot be performed. Both the heart and lungs need to be properly functioning state for surgery to take place. Surgery is of two types: aggressive surgery (long-term control) and palliative procedures (relief of symptoms). Let's define each of them separately. **Aggressive surgery** Aggressive surgery involves removal of the lung, the pleura, the diaphragm and the pericardium by a procedure, which is known as extra pleural pneumonectomy. The intention to follow this method is to physically remove as much of the tumor as possible. It is in fact adopting a bold method to do away with the disease—hence the name is “Aggressive surgery”. This surgery is extremely complicated and involves high risk. This is because of the fact that there are possible chances of death due to the same within a month. Extra pleural pneumonectomy is therefore normally performed on younger patients who are in good health and are in a position to tolerate the surgery. **Palliative Procedures** Palliative procedures are normally performed when the cancer is in its advanced form. These procedures are performed to control the symptoms of mesothelioma rather than cure them. **Pleurectomy (also decortications)** is the process to surgically remove the pleura. This method reduces the pain caused by the cancerous mass and may also prevent the recurrence of pleural effusion (fluid collection which causes tremendous breathlessness). For patients suffering from peritoneal mesothelioma, complete surgical removal of the entire tumor is not entirely possible. In this case the surgery aims to extenuate the symptoms, such as ascites. **Chemotherapy** Chemotherapy is the method in which drugs are used to treat mesothelioma. It has been observed that this method is partially successful. This is because the patient recovers partially after using drugs or combination of drugs (In fact the efficacy of this method increases, if combination of drugs are used at the same time.) Some of these combinations have proved successful and new drugs are being developed for the treatment of this cancer. **Radiation Therapy** In this method the tumor is killed by using radiation doses. However, with the help of this procedure, killing the tumor cells is quite difficult. This is because of the fact that it is difficult to specifically locate the malignant cells. Also the heart, lungs and other organs may surround the same, and they are at the risk of getting damaged by the radiation dosage. However lower doses of radiation can be used to reduce the disease to a certain extent. **Dual Therapy** Both chemotherapy and radiation are used in conjunction after the performance of the surgery. They both help in killing any remaining tumor cells that were not removed by surgery and may also help in relieving symptoms of the disease like chest pain. The treatment methods, which are described above, are direct ways of treating a person suffering from mesothelioma. However doctors and researchers are always on the lookout for new ways to treat mesothelioma. The necessity for the evolution of alternative ways to treat patients suffering from mesothelioma arises because of the complex nature of different types of cancers, and because patients respond differently to various types of medical care. Some of them are as follows: **Immunoaugmentative Therapy (IAT)** The goal of IAT is to strengthen the body's own immune system. The same is done by balancing four different proteins found in the blood. **Intraoperative Photodynamic Therapy (IPT)** This method of treatment is being used to cure early stages of mesothelioma in the chest. IPT uses special drugs and light to kill cancer cells during surgery. A drug that makes tumor cells more sensitive to light is injected into a vein several days before surgery. During surgery, a special light is used to locate the cancer.

### About the Author

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