

Increased lung cancer mortality among Norwegian cooks

Several reports of occupational mortality or incidence have shown an increased risk for lung cancer among cooks (1, 3, 5). In a Norwegian record-linkage study based on information of occupation given in the census of 1970 and on a follow-up of death in 1970–1980 from the Central Bureau of Statistics, cooks were not tabulated separately (2). We would like to give some additional data based on an analysis of cooks only.

Table 1 shows the number of deaths and the standardized mortality ratio (SMR) for all cancers and lung cancer for cooks. The increased SMR of 250 for male cooks is of borderline significance. The difference between the male and female cooks may be due to different work conditions. About 46 % of the male cooks worked as sailors in 1970 versus 2 % of the female cooks.

For male cooks similar results have been given in a Danish study (1, 4) with follow-up from 1970 to 1980 (SMR = 254) and a Swedish study (5) based on incidence in 1961–1973 (standardized incidence ratio 2.4, 99 % confidence interval 1.2–4.5). Both in Denmark and in Norway information on smoking habits indicate that there is the same number of daily smokers among male cooks and the economically active population which formed the basis for the SMR values. Furthermore, both in Denmark and in Norway, cooks have higher SMR values for lung cancer than most other occupational groups, and in Sweden only insu-

lation workers have a higher relative risk (standardized incidence ratio 2.9).

The three studies from the Nordic countries are similar. The information on occupation is taken from the censuses in either 1960 or 1970 with follow-up through national registries of cancer incidence or causes of death. The same classification of occupation has been used, and linkage between census information and the follow-up was almost complete due to the unique identification numbers given all persons in these countries.

The consistently increased risk of lung cancer in these three national studies may suggest that cooks are exposed to occupational carcinogen(s).

References

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Table 1. Mortality from lung cancer and all cancers among cooks (aged 20–69 years in 1970) in Norway, 1970–1980. (SMR = standardized mortality ratio)

	Lung cancer		All cancers	
	Number of deaths	SMR	Number of deaths	SMR
Men	10	250 ^a	37	128
Women	10	125	152	101

^a 95 % confidence interval 95–405.