



Can Exposure to Chemicals Cause MPNs?

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Dr. Levine:

So one question is has Agent Orange or any other chemical stimulus ever been linked to myeloproliferative neoplasms? The short answer is that there is some suggestion that certain chemical exposures can actually increase the risk of myeloproliferative neoplasms.

Particularly, there's an area in Pennsylvania near what's called the Superfund site where there's a much higher incidence of polycythemia vera than we expect that would occur based on normal population predictions. However, we don't know which agents do it or why most patients even in those areas don't develop it.

There may actually even be a risk with some of the different chemicals like Agent Orange, which people were exposed to during the war. But the challenge is that the risk of developing these diseases even for people exposed is low and much lower than many of the other health problems that these patients get into when they get chemical exposures.

So I think it's the kind of thing that we need better and more rigorous data, but one can't say with certainty that it's not involved.

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