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VA Agent Orange Update 2009 (2010) by Dave Barker

Since three conditions were addressed in the most recent release (VAO Update 2009) of the National Association of Sciences I will address the rarest first which is Hairy Cell Leukemia. Another leukemia has been found linked to the herbicide Agent Orange.

The best description I have of Hairy Cell Leukemia describes a rare, slow-growing cancer of the blood in which the bone marrow makes too many B cells (lymphocytes), a type of white blood cell that fights infection. These excess B cells are abnormal and look "hairy" under a microscope because of fine projections (villi) from their surface. As leukemia cells increase, less healthy white blood cells, red blood cells and platelets are produced. Approximately 700 people are diagnosed with Hairy Cell Leukemia each year in the United States. More men are affected by Hairy Cell Leukemia than women, it occurs basically in middle aged or older adults.

Science is not sure what causes Hairy Cell Leukemia, and there is no cure. It is considered a chronic disease, because it may never completely disappear, although treatment can lead to a remission for years.

This leads us to the topic which we have been discussing and debating for several years with the VA and that is ischemic heart disease. We shall quote the report published which stated "there is a finding of 'limited or suggestive evidence of an association" means that the evidence indicates there could be a link between exposure to a chemical and increased risk for a particular health effect, though conflicting results from studies, problems with how the studies were conducted, or other confounding factors limit the certainty of the evidence. Until now, the cumulative evidence had been inadequate to draw conclusions about whether these two conditions may be associated with veterans' exposures to herbicides or TCDD."

Ischemic heart disease has long been associated with the former POW's and now the possibility of the Agent orange exposed veterans being added to the list certainly makes sense to me. Over the past 30 plus years I have observed a great number of my client who were involved in herbicide exposure showing a diagnosis of ischemic heart disease which is a condition characterized by reduced blood supply to the heart. This condition often leads to a heart attack and or a stroke, or both. Since ischemic heart disease is the number one cause of death among people in industrialized countries, it is my opinion the VA will use that fact in any determination of presumption for the veterans exposed.

When VA makes a decision the preponderance is the term used, it means superiority in weight, force, importance, or influence. The bottom line being the following quote from the NAS report, "based on the preponderance of the evidence as well as biologic data beginning to show how TCDD can cause this toxic effect, the committee concluded that the evidence suggests that veterans exposed to defoliants contaminated with TCDD during the war may face a higher risk for developing ischemic heart disease."

Those of us who have been involved in the long struggle acknowledge the major risk factors include buildup of cholesterol in the arteries, age, smoking, high blood pressure, and diabetes. It is also a fact that diabetes another Agent Orange presumptive can cause heart problems. Hopefully before we are all gone, these issues will all be completely addressed.

Finally the discussion which the "Military.com Sound Off Dave Barker Discussion Board" has carried for a considerable time was addressed as well, that being "Parkinson's disease." Here is the direct word for word message from the NAS: "The committee's conclusion that there may be a relationship between Parkinson's disease and Agent Orange exposure stems from its review of

16 studies that looked at herbicide exposures among people with Parkinson's disease or Parkinson's-like symptoms. The finding was bolstered by several studies that have identified exposure to certain compounds similar to those in the herbicides used in the war as potential risk factors for the development of Parkinson's. The committee's review was hampered by the lack of studies investigating the occurrence of Parkinson's disease in Vietnam veterans specifically and the lack of animal studies testing the chemical components of Agent Orange for their potential to cause Parkinson's-like symptoms. The report strongly recommends that studies examining the relationship between Parkinson's incidence and exposures in the veteran population be performed. Parkinson's disease affects approximately 1 percent of people over age 60 -- some 5 million people worldwide."

We are on track folks, it is not the time to relax, but time to move full steam ahead!

Source: <http://davebarker.portalone.us/>
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