

THE CYTOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF BLADDER AND LUNG CARCINOMA RATES ON THE WORKERS EXPOSED TO INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS

Endüstriyel kimyasallara maruz kalan işçilerde mesane ve akciğer kanser oranlarının sitolojik incelemeyle değerlendirilmesi

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ÖZET

Amaç: Bu çalışmanın amacı, Kırıkkale’de endüstriyel kimyasallara maruz kalan işçilerin, mesane ve akciğer kanseri oranlarının idrar ve balgam sitolojisi yöntemleri uygulanarak değerlendirilmesidir.

Yöntem: Barut fabrikasında çalışan 123 işçinin idrar sitolojisi örnekleri, ağır silah ve çelik, silah ve mühimmat fabrikalarında çalışan 408 işçinin balgam sitoloji örnekleri Papanicolaou yöntemiyle hazırlanmış ve ışık mikroskopunda değerlendirilmiştir.

Bulgular: 123 işçiden 15’inin idrarında atipik sitolojik bulgular görülmüştür. Bu işçilerin hiçbirinde önceden mesane kanseri hikâyesi belirlenmemiş ve ultrasonlarında da anormal bulgular görülmemiştir. 408 işçinin 209’u nun balgam sitoloji uygunsuz materyal nedeniyle değerlendirmeye alınamamıştır. Kalan 199 işçiden 103’ünde normal sitoloji, 33’ünde skuamöz metaplazi, 2’sinde displazi belirlenirken, 61 işçide de inflamasyon görülmüştür. İşçilerin kimyasallara maruziyet süresi ve sitoloji bulguları arasında bilimsel olarak anlamlı bir ilişki bulunamamıştır ($p>0.05$). Günde 20 adetten fazla sigara içenlerde anormal balgam (%1,2) ve idrar (%13) sitoloji bulguları saptanmasına karşın istatistiksel olarak yalnızca balgam sitolojisi sonuçlarıyla sigara alışkanlığı arasında bir kolerasyon bulunmuştur ($p=0.015<0.05$).

Sonuç: Sitolojik yöntemlerin uygulanmasının kolay ve ucuz olması ayrıca veinvaziv işlemlere gerek duyulmaması nedeniyle özellikle mesane ve akciğer kanserinin erken tanısında ve kitle taramalarında faydalı bir yöntem olarak kullanılabilceği düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: İdrar sitolojisi, balgam sitolojisi, tarama, kimyasal karsinojenler, erken teşhis, mesleki maruziyet.

ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of this study is to evaluate the ratios of bladder and lung carcinomas of workers exposed to industrial chemicals in Kırıkkale, Turkey by urinary and sputum cytology methods.

Method: Urinary cytology preparations for a total of 123 workers in the gun powder production plant and sputum cytology preparations for a total of 408 workers in the heavy gun and steel, gun, and ammunition plants were prepared using Papanicolaou staining and evaluated by light microscopy.

Results: For the cytological diagnoses of voided urine in all 123 workers, 15 workers had atypical cytological findings. None of them had a prior history of bladder cancer and no significant abnormality was found in their ultrasound examinations. Regarding the cytologic diagnoses of sputum in 408 workers, 209 individuals could not be evaluated because of

inappropriate materials. Of the remaining 199 workers, 103 of them had results within normal limits while 33 of them showed squamous metaplasia, 2 dysplasia and 61 inflammations. No statistically significant relatedness could be found between the workers' exposure time to chemicals and the cytological findings ($p>0.05$). Although abnormal cytological findings of sputum (1.2%) and urine (13%) was found for the smokers of more than 20 cigarettes a day, a statistical correlation was determined between only sputum cytology results and smoking habits ($p=0.015<0.05$).

Conclusion: Because of Cytological methods being easy to apply and relatively inexpensive in addition to not requiring invasive operations, these methods can be used especially for monitoring and early detection of human bladder and lung carcinomas.

Key Words: Urine cytology, sputum cytology, screening, chemical carcinogens, early diagnosis, occupational exposure

INTRODUCTION

Urine cytology is regarded as a valuable screening method for the detection of preclinical bladder cancer among workers in the British dyestuffs industry (1). Detection of a developing bladder cancer before the onset of symptoms offers opportunities for earlier intervention and, possibly, an improved outcome (1).

The most important known risk factor for bladder cancer in North America and Europe is smoking which increases the risk two to five fold and which may be responsible for as many as 50% of all cases (2). Bladder cancer has long been recognized as an occupation-related cancer. It has been estimated that as much as 20% of bladder cancer cases could be attributable to occupational carcinogens (3). There are several known and suspected occupational bladder carcinogens, some of which have been recognized for many decades. Most notable among these are 2-naphthylamine and benzidine, which have been associated with relative risks among highly exposed workers (4). Excess risks of bladder cancer have been documented with cohort studies from several industries: magenta or auramine manufacturing, the rubber industry, aluminum production, and coal gasification. However, some of these industries have been transformed or virtually eliminated, and it is not clear whether substantial risks of occupational bladder cancer remain (5).

Sputum screening for lung cancer is an area that has been significantly researched by different groups. Saccomanno and coworkers (6) collected sputum samples from workers in uranium mines deemed to be at high risk for developing lung cancer. Their sputum was found to harbour atypical cells and patients with these abnormalities overtime developed lung cancer. The link between abnormal sputum cytology and lung cancer development has been subsequently confirmed in other studies (7-9).

Due to expansion of industrialization and urbanization, the prevalence of respiratory disorders has been increased. Occupational respiratory disorders have been recognized for centuries (10,11). Industrial dust, smoke and fumes and poor working environment have been recognized as important causative factors in increasing the prevalence of lung carcinoma among industrial workers. Age, smoking habit, duration and type of exposure at working sites, nutritional and socio-economic status, etc. are known contributory factors (12,13).

The present article reports on a study of cytological monitoring of sputum and urine in workers exposed to chemicals such as ethyl acetate, ethyl alcohol, isopropyl alcohol, thinner, ether, hydrochloric acid, sulphuric acid, diethyl ether, lead, lead vapor, benzene, nitrotoluene, 2,4-dinitrotoluene, 2,4,

6-trinitrotoluene, nitroglycerin, nitrocellulose, carbon black, asbestos in the heavy gun and steel, gun, gunpowder production and ammunition plants in Kırıkkale, Turkey. It is well known that some of above mentioned chemicals are among important carcinogens, and they have strong toxicity (14-30).

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In this study, urine samples from 123 workers at the gun powder plant and 408 workers at the heavy gun and steel, gun, and ammunition plants who were exposed the chemicals such as ethyl acetate, ethyl alcohol, isopropyl alcohol, thinner, ether, hydrochloric acid, sulphuric acid, diethyl ether, lead, lead vapor, benzene, nitrotoluene, 2,4-dinitrotoluene, 2,4,6-trinitrotoluene, nitroglycerin, nitrocellulose, carbon black, asbestos were searched by cytological examination. The ages of workers range between 28-58 years. All are male. Their smoking habits were also searched by questionnaire.

The gunpowder production plant in Kırıkkale, Turkey, manufactures and processes carcinogenic chemicals. The 123 workers were exposed to toxic chemicals at various stages were examined for urine cytology. A screening program for early diagnosis of bladder cancer was organized for those workers who were identified and persuaded to participate in this study. In total, 123 voided urines were prefixed by adding equal volumes of 50% ethanol to the specimens. They were prepared using the membrane filter method of 123 and Papanicolaou staining. All cytology specimens were evaluated by a pathologist (M. Atay from Hannover Cytology Clinic, Germany). The cytological diagnoses classified each specimen as "Positive", "Suspicious", "Atypical" or "Negative". The "positive" category was for nuclear abnormalities for the diagnosis of cancer (31). "Suspicious" indicated similar changes that were suggestive but for some reason (e.g., paucity of cells), were not conclusive for cancer. "Atypical" indicated qualitatively similar

but lesser nuclear abnormalities, below the level of cancer. "Negative" indicated only normal urothelial cells or non-neoplastic abnormalities.

A total of 408 workers in the heavy gun, steel, gun and ammunition plants who were exposed to the toxic chemicals were examined for sputum cytology. For each sputum examination, four cytological slides were prepared. The smears were stained by the Papanicolaou technique. The slides were screened and evaluated independently by a pathologist (M. Aydın from Sanatorium Education and Research Hospital, Ankara, Turkey) as not appropriate for diagnosis, normal, squamous metaplasia, dysplasia (32). For data analysis, the sputum cytology diagnoses were first categorized into five groups: (a) inappropriate specimen (containing no informative bronchial epithelial cells and macrophage cells), (b) normal (negative), (c) inflammation, (d) squamous metaplasia, and (e) dysplasia.

The statistical relationships between workers' cytological diagnosis and their smoking status and the time of exposure to toxic and carcinogenic chemicals were examined by Kendal Tau c test for checking whether they were in concordance or not.

RESULTS

Qualitative modifications (cellular changes, inflammatory infiltrate, metaplasia and dysplasia) in the urine of 123 workers, occupationally exposed to toxic chemicals, were evaluated. The 103 of them were negative, 5 of them were inflammation and 15 of them were atypical cases. The 65 workers exposed to chemicals for less than 15 years had 55 negative, 2 inflammation and 8 atypical cases. Moreover, 58 workers exposed to chemicals for more than 15 years had 48 negative, 3 inflammation and 7 atypical cases (Table 1).

The 96 smokers of 123 urine cytology, 79 had normal transitional epithelia, 5 had inflammatory

cells, erythrocytes and metaplasia, and 12 had atypical changes (Figure 1-3) However, in the cytological examination of 27 non-smokers, 24 samples were normal and 3 samples showed atypical urothelial epithelia (Table 1).

Statistically the urine cytology results are not correlated with the duration of exposure ($p=0.812$) and smoking habits ($p=0.571$) according to Kendall's tau c and Kappa Tests.

For monitoring and possible early diagnosis, further investigation was realized by ultrasound. The 15 subjects with atypical cytology had no significant abnormalities as observed by ultrasound.

According to the sputum cytological results, out of 199 workers, 103 had results within normal limits, 33 had squamous metaplasia while 2 persons had dysplasia, and 61 persons had inflammation (Figures 3-6).

The 136 workers who were exposed to chemicals for less than 15 years had the following cases: 72 negative, 39 inflammations, 24 metaplasias and one dysplasia. Moreover, 63 workers who were exposed to chemicals for more than 15 years had the following cases: 31 negative, 22 inflammations, 9 metaplasia and one dysplasia (Table 2).

Out of 161 smokers, 77 had normal cytology, 52 had inflammation, 30 had metaplasia, and 2 had

dysplasia in their sputum cytology. However, out of 38 non-smokers, 26 had normal cytology, 9 had inflammation, and 3 had metaplasia (Table 2).

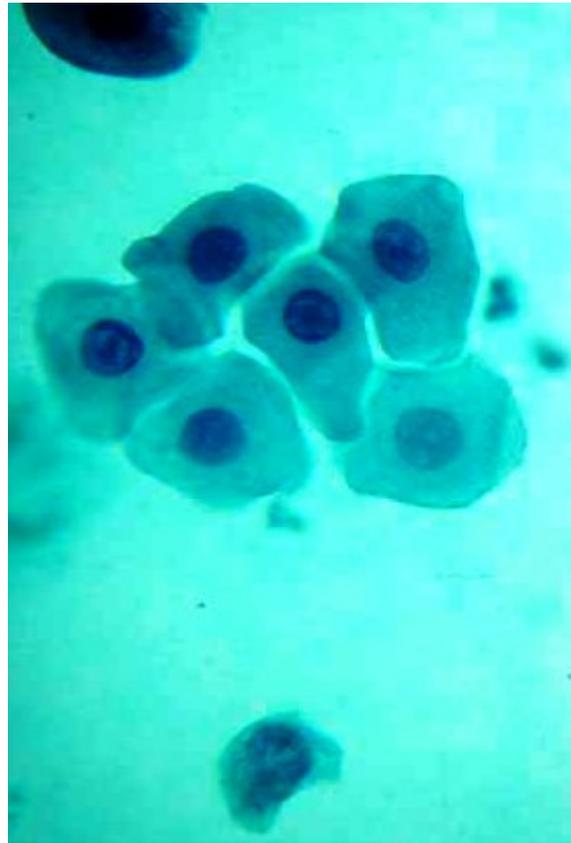


Figure 1. Squamous cell metaplasia in urine cytology. Metaplasia cells have hyperchromatic nucleus (PAP, x200).

Table 1. Duration of exposure to chemicals, smoking status and urinary cytological diagnosis of workers at the gun powder production plant in Kırkkale.

		Cytological diagnosis			Total
		Negative	Inflammation	Atypical	
Exposure to chemicals	≤15 years	55	2	8	65
	>16 years	48	3	7	58
Total		103	5	15	123
Smoking status	Non-smokers	24	-	3	27
	<20 pcs/day	19	3	5	27
	>20 pcs/day	60	2	7	69
Total		103	5	15	123

Statistically the sputum cytology results were not correlated with the duration of exposure ($p=0.737$) and but correlated with smoking habits ($p=0.015<0.05$) according to Kendall's tau c and Kappa Tests.

DISCUSSION

Since the initial report of Crabbe and coworkers (1), many cohorts of high-risk industrial workers have been studied with cytological methods. The ability of cytological screening to ultimately improve the clinical outcome of occupational bladder cancer has been debated (33-35). Both industrial screening and follow-up of known tumors confirmed that urine cytology could detect important but occult lesions,



Figure 2. Atypical or dysplastic cells in urine cytology. (PAP, x200)

particularly non-papillary carcinoma in situ (CIS) and associated small infiltrating carcinomas. Cytology also detected several lesser atypias in flat urothelium, below the level of CIS (36-40).



Figure 3. Atypical or dysplastic cells in urine cytology. They have nucleolus and high nucleus/cytoplasm ratio (PAP, x400)

Table 2. Duration of exposure to chemicals, smoking status and sputum cytological diagnosis of workers at the gun powder production plant in Kırıkkale.

		Cytological diagnosis				Total
		Negative	Inflammation	Atypical	Dysplasia	
Exposure to chemicals	≤15 years	31	22	9	1	63
	>16 years	72	39	24	1	136
Total		103	61	33	2	199
Smoking status	Non-smokers	26	9	3	-	38
	<20 pcs/day	40	20	10	-	70
	>20 pcs/day	37	32	20	2	91
Total		103	61	33	2	199

The incidence of urothelial and renal cancer cases found in miners exposed to explosives containing dinitrotoluenes (DNT) was increased by a factor of 4.5 and 14.3, respectively (41). Morbidity of total malignant tumors in males was markedly higher in Chinese trinitrotoluene (TNT) factory workers than controls (relative risk, 2.3; ref. 42). Puntoni and coworkers (43) investigated the frequency of lung and bladder cancers in a group of 2286 longshoremen employed at the Geneva dockyard who were exposed occupationally to carbon-black dust. They identified 208 cancers, 53 lung cancers and 32 bladder cancers. They founded that the longshoremen who were exposed to high concentrations of carbon black had a significantly increased frequency of bladder cancer.

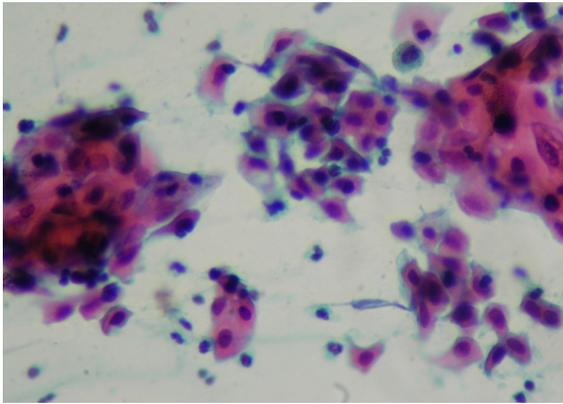


Figure 3. Hyperchromatic squamous metaplasia cell groups in sputum. (PAP, x200)

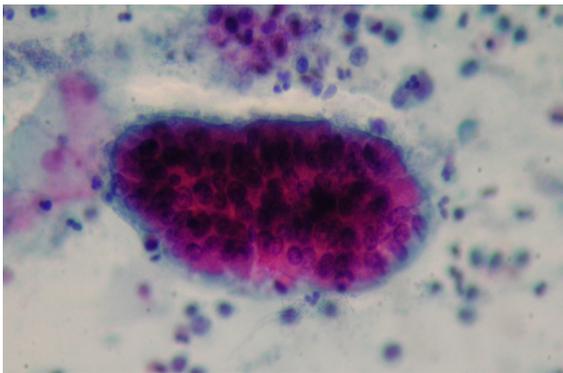


Figure 4. Bronchiolar hyperplasia cell groups in sputum (PAP, x200)

Glashan and coworkers considered mild atypia to be the earliest detectable abnormality in developing industrial bladder cancer (37).

In the present study, 123 workers in the gunpowder factory, occupationally exposed to toxic chemicals, were evaluated by urine cytology. The 65 workers who had been exposed to chemicals for less than 15 years had 2 inflammation and 8 atypical cases. Moreover, 58 workers who had been exposed to chemicals for more than 15 years had 3 inflammation and 7 atypical cases. In addition, the 96 smokers of 123 urine cytology, 5 had inflammatory cells, erythrocytes

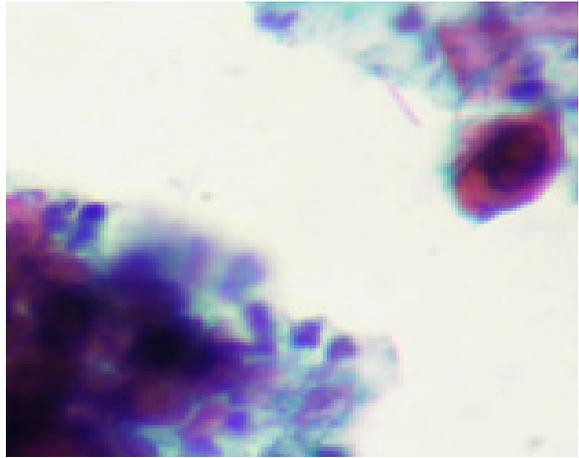


Figure 5. Dysplastic cell with high nucleus/cytoplasm ratio in sputum (PAP, x400)

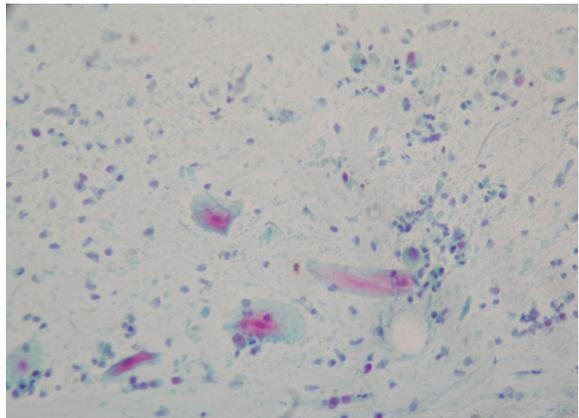


Figure 6. Inflammatory case from sputum (PAP, x100)

and metaplasia, and 12 had atypical changes. However, in the cytological examination of 27 non-smokers, 3 samples were showed atypic urothelial epithelia. Although we found that the smokers had 5 inflammation and 12 atypia cases, while non-smokers had 3 atypia cases, statistically, the results were not correlated with time of exposure and smoking habits ($p>0.05$). We conclude that a larger sample size should be used for this kind of monitoring.

The diagnostic yield of sputum cytology is known to vary in relation to tumor location. Its greatest use is in the identification of central tumors, and it is of little or no value in the identification of peripheral cancers (44).

The workers in the gunpowder factory under study had exposure to a variety of irritants and smoke containing gunpowder, carbon monoxide, thinner, carbon particles, metal fumes from lead, oxides of iron and nitrogen, aldehydes, sulfur dioxide, hydrogen chloride etc. They cause widespread bronchial narrowing by directly injuring the airway mucosa and inflammatory swelling and excessive secretions and/or by stimulating rapidly adapting irritant receptors (45).

There have been several estimates of the proportion of male lung cancers that are due to occupational exposures. Recent estimates of 9% (46) and 3-17% (47) have come from large case-control studies and refer to the proportion of lung cancers attributable to work in occupations with excess risk of lung cancer, rather than to lung cancer attributable to specific occupational carcinogens (48).

Rodriguez and coworkers (49) examined the risk of lung cancer among workers in the main industrial processes of a large iron and steel foundry in Asturias, Spain. They found that workers having ever been employed in the blast furnace had an excess lung

cancer risk compared to a reference group of workers not employed in metal producing departments. In addition, they indicated that tobacco smoking appeared to be an important positive or negative confounder for subgroups of workers.

According to the sputum cytological results of the present study, out of 199 workers, 33 had squamous metaplasia while 2 persons had dysplasia, and 61 persons had inflammation. Out of 161 smokers, 52 had inflammation, 30 had metaplasia, and 2 had dysplasia in their sputum cytology. However, out of 38 non-smokers, 9 had inflammation, and 3 had metaplasia. The 136 workers who had been exposed to chemicals for less than 15 years had 39 inflammations, 24 metaplasias and one dysplasia cases. Moreover, 63 workers who had been exposed to chemicals more than 15 years had 22 inflammations, 9 metaplasia and 1 dysplasia cases. Statistically the sputum cytology results were not correlated with the duration of exposure ($p= 0.737$) and but they were correlated with smoking habits of workers ($p=0.015<0.05$).

It can be concluded that exposure to toxic chemicals, tobacco smoking, can all contribute to pathogenesis of respiratory disorders. Using protective devices, discouraging smoking, conducting engineering measures to create a safe working environment and periodical health checks for workers are recommended measures to reduce respiratory disability among workers.

Environmental carcinogenesis in various forms is likely to remain for a long time. In future, long-term observation of this study will offer a chance to study developing human bladder cancer prospectively with these routine methods in tandem with new approaches, for example, fluorescence in situ hybridisation (FISH) for diagnosis and prognosis.

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