



Long-term respiratory symptoms in World Trade Center responders

(Occupational Medicine 2010;60:145-151)

Introduction

The authors assessed whether New York State (NYS) World Trade Center (WTC) responders were more likely than controls to report lower respiratory symptoms or a diagnosis of asthma five years post-9/11. Persistence and severity of symptoms were also evaluated.

Methods

Participants included a cohort of NYS employees who responded to the WTC disaster (n=578) and a cohort of similar NYS employees who did not respond (n=702). Participants were initially mailed self-administered questionnaires (baseline, year 1, year 2) and then completed a telephone interview in year 3.

Findings

Five years post-9/11, this moderately exposed cohort of WTC responders continued to demonstrate an elevated risk of several lower respiratory symptoms in comparison with a control group. Symptoms suggestive of a diagnosis of chronic bronchitis were also associated with exposure. However, exposure was not associated with reported diagnosis of asthma. Persistence of lower respiratory symptoms through the study period was associated with exposure. Results also suggest that participants with the highest exposures were more likely to experience increased severity of their asthma condition and/or lower respiratory symptoms.

Conclusions

Our findings suggest that even in a moderately exposed responder population lower respiratory effects have been a persistent problem that may require ongoing monitoring. All WTC responders with persistent symptoms, regardless of severity, should be encouraged to seek medical evaluation.

If you have any questions or would like more information about this study, please contact:

Matthew P. Mauer, DO, MPH
NYS Department of Health
Center for Environmental Health
Bureau of Occupational Health
1-800-458-1158, ext. 27900

Karen R. Cummings, MPH
NYS Department of Health
Center for Environmental Health
Bureau of Occupational Health
1-800-458-1158, ext. 27900