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The epidemiology of oesophageal adenocarcinoma: has the cancer of gastric cardia an influence on the rising incidence of oesophageal adenocarcinoma?

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Abstract: Owing to overgrowth and definitional problems in classification, the cancer of gastric cardia may affect significantly the epidemiological analysis of oesophageal adenocarcinoma. The purpose of the present study was to evaluate the changes in the incidence of all the adenocarcinomas near the gastrooesophageal junction. Trends in the incidence rates of adenocarcinoma of the oesophagus and the gastric cardia were described through the Finnish Cancer Registry. The annual age-standardized incidence rates during 1976-95 were analysed by a linear regression technique.

The total incidence of oesophageal carcinoma remained around 3.5/100,000 in men, and decreased from 2.8 to 1.3/100,000 in women. The incidence of oesophageal adenocarcinoma increased from 0.28 to 0.77/100,000 (nearly 300%) in males, and from 0.08 to 0.11 per 100,000 in females. There were no significant changes with time in the incidence rate of gastric cardia cancer in either sex. Combined gastric cardia and oesophageal adenocarcinoma incidence rates remained stable in women, and increased slightly, but significantly, from 2.4 to 2.9/100,000 in men.

Oesophageal adenocarcinoma has increased significantly in men in Finland, but the combined incidence of cancers of the gastro-oesophageal junction has increased only slightly. To overcome the difficulties in classification of oesophageal adenocarcinoma and the cancer of gastric cardia in the epidemiological studies, the focus should be on all adenocarcinomas at or near the oesophagogastric junction.

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