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New cancer concerns for 9/11 responders



(New York - WABC, May 31, 2007) - There are new health concerns surrounding 9/11 responders.

Doctors say the responders are getting blood cancers at unusually young ages, and they blame toxins at ground zero.

Eyewitness News reporter Joe Torres is in Lower Manhattan with the story.

Doctors diagnosed 42-year-old former NYPD detective Ernie Vallebuona with non-Hodgkins Lymphoma in October of 2004. Forty two-year-old John Walcott, also a former city detective, learned he had leukemia in May of 2003.

"Maybe if someone took us serious four years ago, more people would've been tested. We wouldn't be talking about autopsies, this and that. More people would've gotten tested," Walcott said.

"I've been on a crazy ride ever since ... chemotherapy, radiation, stem-cell transfer, all types of treatment. It's been tough," Vallebuona said.

According to researchers, more and more relatively young 9/11 first responders now show signs of cancer -- cancer conditions seemingly triggered by their exposure to a wide range of chemicals and carcinogens at ground zero.

"We know we have a handful of cases of multiple myeloma in very young individuals and multiple myeloma is a condition that almost always presents later in life," said Dr. Robin Herbert of Mt. Sinai Medical Center.

Attorney David Worby, who represents thousands of 9/11 workers, says he warned federal and city officials of these health problems years ago. Now he says it's time for government leaders to do the right thing.

"There are a series of tests that people with a significant exposure need to have. That's got to come from the federal government and the city," Worby said.

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