



NHS STILL FAILING LUNG CANCER PATIENTS SAY EXPERTS

Increase in treatment could save 3000 lives per year

The NHS is still failing lung cancer patients, according to the results of the first national review of lung cancer services, published today (2 November 2009).¹ Despite headway in UK lung cancer prevention, disease awareness and screening, key areas such as diagnosis, treatment rates and access to specialists are still 'woefully inadequate' say the UK's leading lung cancer experts.

According to the United Kingdom Lung Cancer Coalition (UKLCC), one-third of patients still do not receive a biopsy to diagnose their condition, and thousands are denied life saving surgery due to lack of experienced specialists.¹

"There are only 44 full-time equivalent specialist thoracic surgeons spread thinly over 240 multidisciplinary cancer teams across the country and many teams lack core members " says Dr Mick Peake, chair of the UKLCC's clinical advisory group and the NHS national clinical lead for lung cancer. "Alarmingly, patients who are fit for surgery are being turned down."

As well as tracking progress made since the launch of the first UK Lung Cancer Plan in 2007² – the report also maps out where priorities lie for the future.

"In some parts of the UK fewer than 10 percent of patients receive any form of treatment to halt the spread of their disease - that is to say chemotherapy, radiotherapy or surgery. We are calling for a 70 percent active treatment rate across the board, which would mean a massive

reduction in the number of lung cancer deaths. Up to 3000 lives could potentially be saved each year as a result," adds Dr Peake.

The comprehensive review, based on feedback from clinicians at the frontline of lung cancer services, reinforces many of the shocking statistics revealed in the National Lung Cancer Audit published earlier this year.*

"We are still letting lung cancer patients down," says Dame Gill Oliver, chair of the UKLCC. "Our review shows there are still huge variations and vast inequalities in care across the country. We believe that, whatever the cause of their disease, patients deserve the best care and support."

Lung cancer is the UK's biggest cancer killer³; it kills around 34,500 people each year³, which is more than breast cancer, prostate cancer, bladder cancer and leukaemia combined.⁴ The disease accounts for one in 14 (7%) of all deaths in the UK,³ one in six of all cancer cases and one in four of all cancer deaths.⁵ It is reported that four people die from lung cancer in the UK every hour.³ Despite, being labeled a 'smoker's disease', one in eight people with lung cancer have never smoked.⁶

UK lung cancer survival rates compare poorly with the rest of Europe⁷ and, currently, just a quarter of people with lung cancer in England (25%) will live for a year and less than one in ten (7% in England) are still alive five years after diagnosis.⁸

The UKLCC'S vision is to double lung cancer survival during the next six to ten years, with the co-operation of health professionals, local primary care organizations and government.

"We know if we apply the best standards of care already being demonstrated in some parts of the country, we can double one year survival by 2015 and five year survival by 2020," says Dame Gill Oliver.

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Note to editors:

UKLCC November 2009

*The National Lung Cancer Audit for 2007, published in April 2009, highlighted:-

- Only half (51%) of lung cancer patients receive any kind of active treatment.
- Only 10% of patients have surgery – still the best hope of a cure.
- Not all patients have access to a specialist nurse - a vital source of information and support for patients and their families

The report can be accessed at <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/services/national-clinical-audit-support-programme-ncasp/audit-reports/lung-cancer>

**According to the Eurocare 4 Study, average five year survival in the UK is 8.95 percent [England (8.6%), Scotland (8.0%), N Ireland (10.2%) and Wales (9.0%)] compared to 12.3% average in Europe⁷ and a 15 percent average in the United States.⁹

The UK Lung Cancer Coalition (UKLCC) is a coalition of the UK's leading lung cancer experts, senior NHS professionals, charities and healthcare companies. It is the UK's only multi-interest group in lung cancer. www.uklcc.org.uk The UKLCC was established in November 2005 to help to bring lung cancer out of the political, clinical and media shadow. In addition to sponsorship and grants from its constituent organizations, including charities, core funding for the UKLCC is obtained from membership fees received from pharmaceutical companies.

Smoking prevention would save at least seven out of eight of the lives lost to lung cancer each year.

References:

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3. Figures from Cancer Research UK, available at: <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/types/lung/mortality/>
4. Figures from Cancer Research UK, available at: <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/cancerstats/mortality/cancerdeaths/?a=5441>
5. Cancer Atlas of UK and Ireland, 2005. Chapter 13, p139
6. Peto, R et al. [Mortality from smoking in developed countries 1950-2000](#) 2004
7. Survival for eight major cancers and all cancers combined for European adults diagnosed in 1995-99: results of the EURO CARE-4 study Franco Berrino, Roberta De Angelis, Milena Sant, Stefano Rosso, Magdalena The Lancet Oncology, [Volume 8, Issue 9](#), Pages 752 - 753, September 2007
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