



UNITED KINGDOM
LUNG CANCER COALITION

Cancer Nursing Practice
November 2009
Circ: ?

News

Report highlights poor access to nurse specialists for patients with lung cancer

First national review cites low nurse numbers and calls for roles to be 'protected and expanded'

By Lisa Berry

ACCESS TO nurse specialists for patients with lung cancer is 'woefully inadequate', according to the first national review of lung cancer services in the UK.

The review, published by the UK Lung Cancer Coalition (UKLCC) this month, is a progress report on the interest group's 2007 *Lung Cancer Plan*, which highlights 12 areas where care could be improved. It notes that, since 2007, patient access to lung cancer nurse specialists and 24-hour community nursing for patients requiring palliative care have been limited.

While nurse specialists can improve patients' access to information and experience of care, the review estimates that there are only 200 specialist lung cancer nurses across the UK for a patient

population of 38,000 diagnoses each year. The disease kills 34,000 people in the UK each year.

'On average there is just one lung cancer nurse in England for every 127 people diagnosed with lung cancer, compared with 82 people for every breast cancer nurse,' the review says. It calls for nurse specialist roles to be 'protected and expanded'.

In line with the *End of Life Care Strategy*, it wants to see better provision of community nursing services, so that patients who wish to die at home can do so.

Nicola Bell, lead lung cancer clinical nurse specialist and representative of the National Lung Cancer Forum for Nurses on the UKLCC, said: 'This review reinforces the vital need for lung cancer nurses. Without them, patients will suffer as they will not have

access to the nursing knowledge, care and support specialist nurses can provide.'

She added: 'Despite lung cancer being the UK's biggest cancer killer, there simply aren't enough nurses compared with the number of patients. Specialist nurses are a valuable resource and save the NHS money.'

The UKLCC review also states that symptom awareness initiatives should be targeted at primary and community nurses so they can encourage symptomatic patients to see their GP.

The review reinforces the findings of the *National Lung Cancer Audit* published in April that only one third of patients with lung cancer are seen by nurse specialists. The audit captured data on more than 26,000 patients in the UK first seen in 2007.

i Find out more

To read the review go to www.uklcc.org.uk
See Continuing professional development, page 27