



Manchester Evening News
2nd November 2009
Circ: 153,724

6 >> NEWS

Quick diagnosis helped me beat lung cancer – but I'm the lucky one

Life-saving op 'was exception not the rule'

Treatment 'woefully inadequate' says report

JOHN SCHEERHOUT

A YOUNG woman who suffered from a rare form of lung cancer believes she would be dead if she had not got quick diagnosis and treatment.

But Rea Cobb, 26, from Stockport, said speedy surgery to remove a tumour was 'the exception rather than the rule'.

She is backing a report from researchers which says key areas of NHS lung cancer treatment are 'woefully inadequate'.

The UK Lung Cancer Coalition (UKLCC) says poor treatment could be costing up to 3,000 lives a year.

It says a third of patients still don't receive a biopsy to diagnose their condition, and thousands are denied life-saving surgery because of a lack of experienced specialists.

Less than 4 per cent of lung cancer patients in Greater Manchester and Cheshire

SURVIVOR Rea Cobb

get surgery – still the best chance of beating the disease – and only 45pc have a biopsy, it says.

Lung cancer is the second most common cancer in the country, with about 39,000 people diagnosed a year.

The disease kills about 34,500 people a year – one in four of all cancer deaths.

Dr Mick Peake, chairman of the UKLCC's clinical advisory group, said: "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.

"Alarming, patients who are fit for surgery are being turned down. We are calling for a 70 per cent active treatment rate across the board, which would mean a massive reduction in the number of lung cancer deaths.

"Up to 3,000 lives could potentially be saved each year as a result."

Civil servant Rea went to her GP when she coughed up

blood in July last year. The doctor dismissed it as a burst blood vessel as Rea had been pulling down a ceiling as she redecorated her home.

She went back to her GP at Christmas after coughing up more blood and was referred to an ear, nose and throat consultant, who also dismissed it.

However, Rea was sent for a precautionary chest x-ray

which revealed a shadow on her lung.

A biopsy was taken and a week later, at the end of February, Rea was told she had a rare form of lung cancer.

Surgeons removed part of her right lung less than four weeks later. Six months on, Rea still requires regular checks.

Rea said: "My treatment was very good. It was three-and-half weeks between diagnosis and surgery. But I could see staff were very stretched. There aren't enough consultants.

"Staff work very, very hard on limited resources and all the time there's a tumour in your body killing you. I think I was the exception possibly because I was so young and I had a rare form of lung cancer.

Asked about her prospects had she not been diagnosed so quickly, Rea said: "I would be dead. My symptoms would have got worse. And the tumour would have got worse."

'Patients who are fit for surgery are being turned down'



