

World Lung Cancer Day 2019: Respiratory groups raise awareness about lung cancer risks, screening, and treatments

Cape Town, Glenview, Lausanne, Montevideo, New York, Paris, Tokyo, 1 August 2019

On World Lung Cancer Day, the Pan African Thoracic Society alongside members of the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) commemorates, celebrates and supports those impacted by lung cancer. FIRS continues to support the grassroots efforts of the lung cancer community to raise awareness about lung cancer and its global impact, creating an educational movement of understanding about lung cancer risks, as well as early treatment around the world.

Lung cancer is one of the most common cancers worldwide, accounting for 2.09 million new cases in 2018. Lung cancer claimed 1.76 million lives in 2018. It is also responsible for nearly 1 in 5 cancer deaths according to the World Health Organization. Lung cancer kills more people yearly than breast, colon and prostate cancers combined.

While most understand that smoking is the single greatest risk factor for lung cancer, other lesser known risk factors include the environment and genetics. Environmental exposure to radon, asbestos, arsenic, beryllium and uranium has been linked to lung cancer. The risk of lung cancer also increases with a history of cancer in another part of the body, age, family history, radiation to the chest area and lung diseases like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Being aware of key symptoms and screening options is vital for early detection and treatment. Symptoms include change in mucus, chest or back pain, coughing up blood and difficulty swallowing. Tests that may be used to diagnose lung cancer include chest x-rays, CT and PET scans, bronchoscopy and needle biopsies. If you are a current or former smoker and over the age of 55, you may be a candidate for a low-dose CT scan screening that can potentially detect lung cancer in its earliest stages.

"The number of new cases each year has increased from 1.8 million to 2.09 between 2012 and 2018. Treatment options for lung cancer have significantly advanced over the past few years, and survival rates are increasing. World Lung Cancer Day efforts continue to raise awareness of risks and increase early detection for the best possible outcomes." said Dr. Clayton T. Cowl, President of the American College of Chest Physicians, a FIRS member.

About the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS)

The Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) is an organisation comprised of the world's leading international respiratory societies working together to improve lung health globally: American College of Chest Physicians (CHEST), American Thoracic Society (ATS), Asian Pacific Society of Respiriology (APSR), Asociación Latino Americana De Tórax (ALAT), European Respiratory Society (ERS), International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases (The Union), Pan African Thoracic Society (PATS), Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA), and the Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD).

The goal of FIRS is to unify and enhance efforts to improve lung health through the combined work of its more than 70,000 members globally.

Lung Cancer 2019 Fact Sheet

Lung cancer: the most fatal cancer

- Lung cancer is the most common cancer worldwide, accounting for more than 2 million new cases and 1.7 deaths in 2018.
- Lung cancer is responsible for nearly one in five global deaths.
- The highest estimated rates of lung cancer are in Hungary (56.7) and Serbia (49.8).
- More than 90% of high-income countries reported treatment services are available for lung cancer as compared with less than 30% of low-income countries.
- Lung cancer risk factors include active and passive exposure to tobacco smoke, biomass fuels, diesel exhaust, radon, asbestos and other environmental and workplace carcinogens.
- The lung cancer five-year survival rate (17.7%) is lower than many other leading cancer sites, such as the colon (64.4%), breast (89.7%) and prostate (98.9%).

Treating lung cancer

- In lower income countries, access to care and cost-effective treatments can reduce the human burden and societal impact of lung cancer.
- Screening with CT scans compared with chest radiography resulted in a 20% reduction in lung cancer-specific deaths, but much cheaper and more accessible methods are needed for low-income settings.
- Early-stage lung cancer is treated with curative-intent surgery or radiation therapy.
- Selective patients may benefit from chemotherapy after surgical resection, while patients with local advanced disease may benefit from concurrent chemo-radiotherapy with or without surgery.
- Although advanced stage lung cancer is not curable, many patients may have symptom improvement and survival prolongation by effective treatment.
- Molecular-targeted therapy against epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) mutations and anaplastic lymphoma kinase (ALK) re-arrangements attain tumor response rates of around 70%.
- Immunotherapy for lung cancer alone, or in combination with conventional treatments, may also improve outcomes for patients fighting lung cancer.
- Environmental causes of lung cancer, such as radon and asbestos, can be monitored and reduced. Countries must not be allowed to export asbestos to poorer countries.
- Other known modifiable risk factors, such as biomass fuels, diesel exhausts and air pollution must also be addressed.
- Better screening, early diagnosis and identifying molecular targets for effective and cost-effective modern treatment should improve lung cancer outcomes.
- Globally, efforts to reduce inequity of care and access to effective and affordable treatments are also vital for addressing the lung cancer crises around the world.

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