

Lung Cancer Screening Criteria Should Include Occupational Exposure History

Early detection of lung cancer in a population at high risk due to occupation and smoking

Laura S. Welch, John M. Dement, Kim Cranford, Janet Shorter, Patricia S. Quinn, David K. Madtes, and Knut Ringen. Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 2018.

Overview

Low-dose CT scans can save lives by identifying lung cancers at an early stage, when treatment is most likely to be effective. Based on a growing body of evidence, the US National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) recommends including both smoking and occupational exposures to define populations eligible for CT screening. In the current study, researchers screened 1260 former construction workers from the Building Trades National Medical Screening Program (BTMed), a population that included both heavy smokers and also lighter smokers who had been exposed to harmful vapors, gases, dusts, and fumes – including known carcinogens – during their years on the job.

Key Findings

- Using criteria that include occupational risk, researchers detected a rate of lung cancer (1.6%) equivalent to that found in the previous studies of heavy smokers - even though less than half the cohort met the heavy smoking criteria used in the other studies.
- This study validates the lung cancer screening entry criteria recommended by the National Comprehensive Cancer Network.
- Early Lung Cancer Detection programs should include individuals at high risk from occupational exposures even if they do not meet the general smoking criteria.

For more information, contact:

Laura Welch: lwelch@cpwr.com
Patricia Quinn: pquinn@cpwr.com

See abstract:

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