

Special

LUNG CANCER UPDATE

More research funding needed to quell lung cancer mortality rates

Lung cancer causes 27 per cent of cancer deaths among Canadians. This year alone, Statistics Canada estimates that there will be 25,400 new cases of lung cancer diagnosed.

"It is the deadliest cancer," says Dr. Natasha Leighl, medical oncologist and president of Lung Cancer Canada. "It kills more Canadians than breast, prostate and colon cancer added together each year."

Yet lung cancer receives only seven per cent of cancer-specific research funding, and less than one per cent of cancer donations.

"Lung cancer has a devastating effect on thousands of Canadians and their families every year," says Peter MacKendrick, who was diagnosed with the disease two and a half years ago. "While there have been significant advancements in higher-profile cancers, such as breast and prostate cancer," he says, there has not been the same effort to find advancements for lung cancer.

"I think we need to do that," he adds. "The pain a child feels because they have lost their mother or father is not any less because it was to lung cancer. They deserve the same research efforts."

Mr. MacKendrick was never a smoker, and he notes that the number of people who have never smoked but are diagnosed with lung cancer is on the rise. "The idea that this is a disease that only smokers get is completely false," he says.

In fact, 10 to 15 per cent of people with lung cancer never smoked, says Dr. Leighl.

Research is having a tremendous impact on treatment for all cancer patients. Mr. MacKendrick describes the quality of care he has received from the staff at Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto as "absolutely amazing. They have created a culture of caring and compassion that responds to patients' real needs."

The Healing Journey Program, for example, helps patients, their caregivers and families learn what they can do to help themselves, particularly to relieve the stress and emotional turmoil that come with a diagnosis, he says.

Innovative new treatments are providing reason for hope. In B.C., Alberta and Ontario, for example, lung cancer patients now have access to personalized therapy. "Individuals with EGFR-mutation-positive lung cancer will now be able to get provincially funded EGFR TKI gefitinib, [a new drug], rather than intravenous chemotherapy, as initial treatment of advanced disease," says Hailee Morrison, executive director of Lung Cancer Canada.

The new treatment, available as a tablet, is less toxic and leads to better quality of life than traditional chemotherapy in these patients. "It is a tremendous step forward in molecularly targeted therapy in lung cancer," says Ms. Morrison. "It is our hope that all Canadian

provinces now follow the lead of these provinces."

High-precision radiation, robotic surgery and minimally invasive surgery are all recent, key advances in the treatment of lung cancer, says Dr. Leighl.

Lung Cancer Canada has a network of medical oncologists, radiologists, pathologists and thoracic surgeons working across Canada to advance treatments and outcomes. "We know that the need for molecular testing is critical for lung cancer patients, and that early detection through CT screening is a necessary tool to reduce mortality and morbidity from this disease," says Ms. Morrison.

"We are discovering that there are different types of lung cancer within the broader diagnosis," says Dr. Leighl. "Molecular testing can identify patients who may have dramatic benefits from certain targeted therapies, such as gefitinib, or erlotinib for those with EGFR mutations in their cancer, or crizotinib for those with ALK rearrange-

ments in their cancer."

Outcomes achieved with these new treatments include very high rates of cancer shrinkage, longer time to cancer growth, better quality of life, fewer side-effects than chemotherapy and longer survival in some cases, she says.

But more research and financial support for it are direly needed. In early November, Lung Cancer Canada announced its intention to raise money for research in this severely underfunded field.

"No one deserves to die of lung cancer," says Dr. Leighl. "Many of our patients are too unwell from their cancer to be able to raise awareness and funds for research. But with the support of our fellow Canadians, we can help improve awareness, support and research funding for this terrible disease."

ONLINE?

For more information, visit www.lungcancercanada.ca.

TAKING ACTION

LUNG CANCER TOMORROW

Together Canadians can change the face of lung cancer so that tomorrow we have many more survivors to tell their stories.

1. Reduce the stigma of this disease by speaking out

Lung cancer carries a stigma almost unheard of with any other deadly disease. Removing the stigma of lung cancer as "self-imposed" would encourage advocates and survivors to have a louder voice and demand early diagnosis and treatment that will save lives.

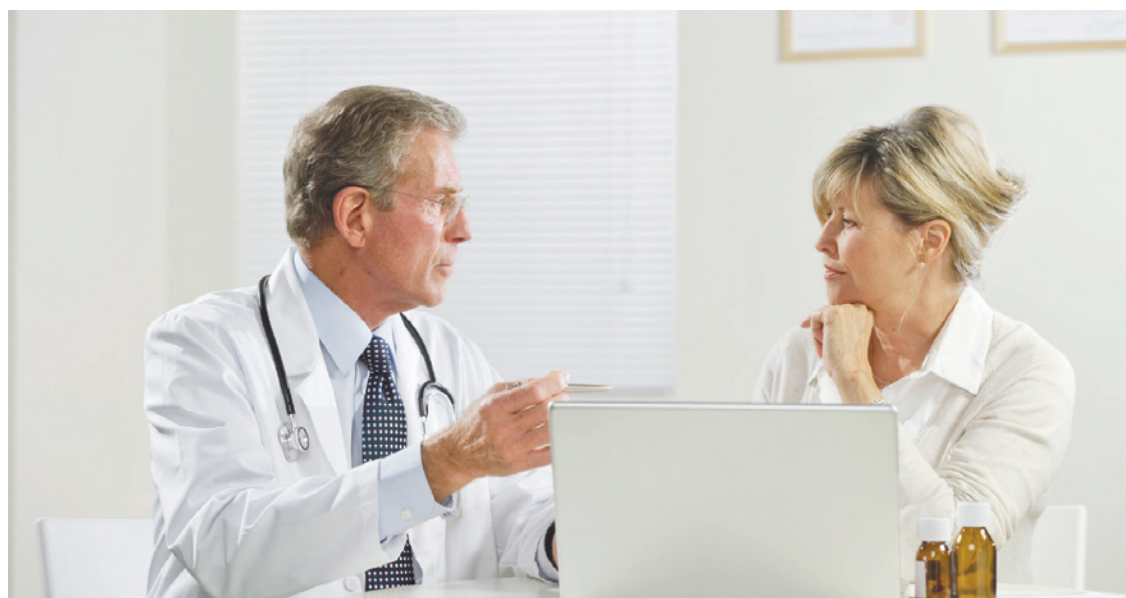
2. Lobby and advocate

The lack of funding for lung cancer research impedes the rate at which new diagnostics and therapies are discovered, tested and deployed. We need increased government investment in lung cancer research across the spectrum of the disease.

3. Become educated about treatment choices

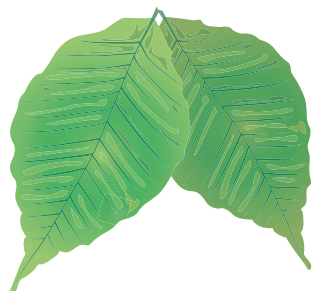
Support research and development of new therapies to improve survival rates and facilitate the development of molecularly guided treatments.

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While innovative new treatments are providing reason for hope, lung cancer advocates say research to address this high-mortality disease area remains woefully underfunded. PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM

This report was produced in conjunction with the advertising department of The Globe and Mail. Richard Deacon, National Business Development Manager, rdeacon@globeandmail.com.



LUNG CANCER CANADA

Awareness. Support. Education.

Lung Cancer Canada is the only charitable organization dedicated to providing access to education for patients and caregivers, increasing awareness about the importance of Lung Cancer as a significant and rising health issue among Canadians.

Lung Cancer kills more people each year than breast, prostate and colorectal cancer combined. Lung Cancer Canada is working to provide a voice for those affected by lung cancer. Most are unaware of the high incidence and mortality rates of this disease and the need for early detection programs, and research that leads to better treatments.

"In the medical and scientific communities, we continue to research and enhance our understanding of lung cancer biology, so that we may improve early detection, prevention and treatment strategies in this disease. Our goal is to make lung cancer a preventable and curable cancer for all."

Natasha B. Leighl, MD

Learn more about Lung Cancer at www.lungcancercanada.ca or by calling us at 1-888-445-4403.

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