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Lung Cancer Patients Ask Governments to Outline Plans for Vaccination of Cancer Patients Talk to Us – Let Us Know We Are Not Forgotten

RELEASE (Toronto/ March 11, 2021): A recent survey of Canadian lung cancer patients conducted by Lung Cancer Canada, found considerable confusion about COVID-19 vaccination plans. While 92% of patients indicated that they would receive the vaccine immediately if given, 38% were unsure about when they would receive it, and 24% believed that they would receive it with the general population. Only 37% believed that they would receive the COVID-19 vaccine earlier, with a high-risk population.

“Lung cancer patients are just asking not to be forgotten”, says lung cancer survivor and Lung Cancer Canada’s Program Committee Chair, MaryAnn Bradley. “Now that many provinces are completing the vaccinations of those in the highest priority, governments need to provide clarity for cancer patients and help relieve an already anxious situation caused by the pandemic. Just talk to us and tell us that there is plan.”

The survey points to a large gap, both federally and provincially, when it comes to communicating with cancer patients. Over 80% of survey respondents indicated dissatisfaction with the federal and provincial governments in regards to how they are addressing the needs of cancer patients in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout.

“Treatments for lung cancer, such as chemotherapy or radiation can weaken immune systems, making it harder to fight infections. This means that lung cancer patients can be at higher risk for more serious outcomes from COVID-19,” says Dr Paul Wheatley-Price, President of Lung Cancer Canada. “While many medical conditions increase the risk of complications from COVID-19, lung cancer is one of those and therefore cancer patients should receive some prioritization.”

Despite this, communication from the provinces has been incomplete. While some provinces like British Columbia and Ontario have released their vaccination plans which included prioritization of cancer patients, others have not yet done so. Lung Cancer Canada calls on all provincial governments to release their COVID-19 vaccination plans and include cancer patients in a priority group.

Anxiety around COVID-19 has also caused some patients to be hesitant to seek medical care. “Although cancer centres have excellent systems to keep patients safe from COVID-19, many patients are still hesitant to seek medical care”, says Wheatley-Price. “This risks delayed



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diagnosis or treatments and potentially can lead to poor outcomes for cancer patients. Vaccination can help reduce some of the fear patients have of coming into the hospital.”

“None of us wanted or deserved our cancer”, says Bradley. “We would have preferred not to be high risk but we are. We just need to know that governments recognize and take care of our needs.”

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