
Treatment Delay for Lung Cancer Patients



According to researchers, patients suspected of having lung cancer may wait too long to receive treatment, and too many patients skip vital diagnostic steps that are needed to help determine the best possible treatment. They encourage patients undergoing surgery for lung cancer to ask questions (eg, what treatment is best for them) and take active role in their treatment plan. The study is published in *The Annals of Thoracic Surgery*.

Raymond Osarogiagbon, MBBS and Nicolas Faris, MDiv led a group of researchers from Baptist Cancer Center and the University of Memphis in Tennessee, who reviewed hospital records for all patients who underwent surgery for suspected lung cancer at Baptist Memorial Hospital between January 2009 and June 2013. They wanted to know how much time it takes to begin care and what steps are taken to determine appropriate treatment for these patients.

"It takes too long for patients who have suspected lung cancer to get final treatment, and too many patients skip vital steps needed to decide the best possible treatment," Dr. Osarogiagbon points out. "This delay in treatment can cause the cancer to advance and reduce the odds of survival for the patient."

Of the 614 eligible patients included in the analysis, 27 percent had no preoperative diagnostic procedure, 22 percent did not have an imaging scan to stage the cancer, and 88 percent did not have an invasive staging test. Notably, only 1 in 10 patients (10 percent) had the recommended combination of three staging tests — computed tomography (CT) scan, positron emission tomography (PET)/CT scan, and an invasive test — before surgery.

Overall, results also showed that it took a month and a half to more than six months for many patients to undergo surgery after an initial x-ray displayed signs of possible lung cancer.

"Lung cancer care is complicated, and all key specialists must be actively engaged early on with each patient to determine the best sequence of tests and treatment for each individual," Dr. Osarogiagbon says.

Faris also notes that quality matters at every step in the lung cancer treatment process. "Patients should feel comfortable taking an active role in their treatment process and ask a lot of questions — find out what treatment is right for them, why that option is the best, and what steps they can take to be better prepared for treatment," he says.

The study is part of an ongoing prospective process-of-care analysis to examine factors associated with deviation from optimal care delivery for both surgical and non-surgical patients.

Source: [Society of Thoracic Surgeons](#)

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