



News Release

“DON’T IGNORE A PERSISTENT COUGH”, WARNS LUNG CANCER CAMPAIGN

Survey reveals that Londoners are unaware of symptoms of lung cancer

Almost 24,000 people a year in England receive a lung cancer diagnosis when the disease is at a late stage¹ – only around 15 per cent of cases are diagnosed at the earliest stage, when treatment is most likely to be successful.

The next phase of the NHS Be Clear on Cancer campaign launches today to drive awareness of the signs and symptoms of lung cancer and to encourage people with a persistent cough to see their GP early.

Lung cancer is currently England's biggest cancer killer, causing around 28,000 deaths each year, with 2,843 cases in London². Those diagnosed at the earliest stage are five times more likely to survive lung cancer for at least five years than those diagnosed at a late stage.³

One of the reasons behind London’s low early diagnosis rate is the public’s lack of awareness about the disease and its symptoms. New survey data shows⁴:

- 68% of people in London are unaware that lung cancer is England’s biggest cancer killer;
- Despite the fact that lung cancer is most common in people aged over 50, 22% of people in London think that all age groups are equally at risk of lung cancer; and
- 41% of people are unaware that a cough that has lasted three weeks or more is a potential symptom of lung cancer.

The Be Clear on Cancer campaign, which first ran in summer 2012, aims to make people aware of the symptoms of lung cancer and encourage them to visit their GP if they have had a cough for three weeks or more.

¹ National Lung Cancer Audit. Note: late stage of diagnosis refers to those diagnosed at stages 3 and 4 for NSCLC (non-small cell lung cancers) or extensive disease for SCLC (small cell lung cancers). Around 33,800 patients are diagnosed with lung cancer every year in England

² Source: Data provided by Public Health England, West Midlands Knowledge & Intelligence Team, on behalf of the United Kingdom Association of Cancer Registries, May 2013

³ 35 per cent of people diagnosed at the earliest stage (TNM stage 1) survive at least five years compared to under 7 per cent for those diagnosed at a late stage (TNM stage 3 & 4). Source: The National Cancer Registration Service (NCRS), Eastern Office; patients diagnosed with lung cancer during 2003-2006 in the former Anglia Cancer Network

⁴ Online omnibus survey conducted with representative sample of 1045 adults aged 16+ in England between 7 – 10 June 2013 by TNS BMRB

Dr Yvonne Doyle, London Regional Director for Public Health England, said:

“The survey of London residents indicates that more needs to be done to raise awareness of the symptoms of lung cancer and ultimately save more lives in the capital.

“Results from previous awareness campaigns in London have been encouraging but Londoners are still generally unaware that a persistent cough may be a symptom of lung cancer. Only by increasing awareness of potential symptoms of lung cancer, and encouraging people to visit their doctor sooner rather than later, will we see the number of early diagnoses, and people surviving the disease, start to rise.”

Sean Duffy, National Clinical Director for Cancer at NHS England, said:

“Awareness campaigns like this are especially important in getting people with potential symptoms into doctors’ surgeries. During the regional pilot, trusts saw a 14% increase in lung cancer cases diagnosed compared with a year earlier.⁵

“However, more needs to be done for our survival rates to be as good as the best in Europe. If they were, it is estimated that around 1,300 deaths could be avoided each year.”

The Be Clear on Cancer campaign will see adverts – fronted by real GPs – on TV, print and radio from today until mid-August. Face-to-face events will also take place in shopping centres across the country.

Notes to Editors

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1. Public Health England is a new executive agency of the Department of Health, which took up its full responsibilities on 1 April 2013. PHE will work with national and local government, industry and the NHS to protect and improve the nation's health and support healthier choices and will be addressing inequalities by focusing on removing barriers to good health. To find out more visit our website www.gov.uk/phe, follow us on Twitter: @PHE_London
2. The Be Clear on Cancer lung cancer campaign first ran nationally in England last summer (May to June 2012). Prior to this, it was piloted in the East and West Midlands for five weeks in October to November 2011.

⁵ National Lung Cancer Audit

3. The Be Clear on Cancer campaign is part of the National Awareness and Early Diagnosis Initiative, run in partnership with Cancer Research UK, to improve England's cancer survival rates.
4. The Government's priorities for cancer as set out in *Improving Outcomes: A Strategy for Cancer* (January 2011) includes the ambition to save an additional 5,000 lives per year by 2014/15.

5. **Dr Jesme Fox, medical director of Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation, said:**

"As a national lung cancer charity, we welcome this campaign and are very supportive of it. Knowing the symptoms of lung cancer might just save your life, or the life of someone you love. If you have new or worsening symptoms, such as a persistent cough, it is really important to get checked out by your GP. The chances are, you won't have lung cancer. But, if you do, it is important to be diagnosed as early as possible to give yourself the best chance of being cured."

6. **Sarah Woolnough, Cancer Research UK's executive director of policy, said:**

"Detecting lung cancer early and ensuring people get the best possible treatment is vital for better survival. Lung cancer remains our biggest killer – responsible for around a quarter of all cancer deaths - and the UK's survival rates lag behind comparable countries. Campaigns to increase awareness of the disease and its symptoms, and to reduce the fear of getting signs checked out are very welcome. We can and must do more to improve our lung cancer survival rates, and alongside campaigns, Cancer Research UK is investing in research initiatives to help our understanding of the disease and to develop new and kinder treatments to beat it."

7. Lung cancer symptoms:

The main symptom is a persistent cough for three weeks or more. Other symptoms include:

- a cough that has got worse or changes
- repeated chest infections
- coughing up blood
- breathlessness
- feeling more tired than usual for some time
- losing weight for no obvious reason
- an ache or pain in your chest or shoulder that has lasted some time