



Contact:

Washington State Radiological Society
Debra Alderman
Executive Director
2001 6th Ave., Suite 2700
Seattle, WA 98121
debra@wsrs.org
206-956-3650

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For immediate release

Radiologists of Washington State are applauding this week's announcement by The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) of a draft proposal to cover an annual low-dose CT scan for Medicare beneficiaries at high risk for developing lung cancer.

WSRS President, Dr. Eric Stern stated "Our member radiologists enthusiastically welcome and endorse this draft proposal. Low dose chest CT scan screening will save thousands of lives each year from the nation's leading cancer killer." Dr. Stern added, "We strongly advise current and former heavy smokers to speak with their doctors about whether CT lung cancer screening is right for them. If they and their doctor decide that screening is warranted, we encourage patients to seek out care at an ACR lung cancer screening center."

Medicare has determined that people who meet three criteria—55 to 74 years of age, a smoking history of 30 pack years and still smoking or have quit smoking within the last 15 years— are considered high risk and will be eligible for an annual low-dose CT scan, according to the proposal. In order to receive this scan, Medicare proposes they will need to go to a radiology imaging center whose experts have significant experience in recognizing lung cancer in CT scans. Physicians can help their patients determine whether they meet the criteria for annual screening.

"CT lung cancer screening is the first and only cost-effective test proven to significantly reduce lung cancer deaths" said Ella Kazerooni, M.D., FACR, chair of the American College of Radiology Lung Cancer Screening Committee and American College of Radiology Thoracic Imaging Panel.

Computed tomography (CT) screening is a test used to detect lung cancer before any symptoms appear. Results of the **National Lung Screening Trial (NLST)** released in August, 2011, showed that screening with low-dose spiral computed tomography (CT) scans versus standard chest X-rays reduced lung cancer deaths among older heavy smokers by 20 percent. Improved detection at earlier stages, when lung cancer is more easily treated, is key to increased survival, according to the study.

According to the American College of Radiology, more than 220,000 people will be diagnosed with lung cancer nation-wide this year. Nearly 160,000 people will die from the disease-- more than breast, colon and prostate cancers combined. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death for both men and women in the United States. The five-year survival rate for lung cancer patients is only 17 percent.

“This is a great day for those at high-risk for lung cancer and their families. We look forward to a future where a lung cancer diagnosis is no longer essentially a death sentence for so many people,” said Dr. Kazerooni.

CMS is allowing the public to submit comments to Medicare in response to its proposal until December 10, 2014. A final announcement is expected in February 2015 at which time coverage for Medicare beneficiaries will begin. Members of the public may comment on the proposal directly [from this page](#) of the CMS.gov website.

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