Health coalition forms National Lung Cancer Roundtable to increase screening and reduce lung cancer deaths

AstraZeneca-supported effort aims to improve early detection of lung cancer and ensure quality care for all stages of the disease

ATLANTA, March 23, 2017 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The American Cancer Society and a coalition of leading professional, government and non-governmental organizations are coming together to form the National Lung Cancer Roundtable to accelerate the nation's efforts to reduce mortality from lung cancer. The group will focus on ensuring those at high-risk for lung cancer have access to high-quality screening, while also working to ensure patients receive timely, patient-centered, state-of-the-art care for all stages of lung cancer.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among men and women in the United States. The disease killed about 158,000 people in 2016 and accounts for about one in four deaths from all cancers annually.

Lung cancer screening only recently started to become part of mainstream preventive care for current and former smokers. The strategies to reduce lung cancer deaths have traditionally focused solely on reducing tobacco use. Now, with clear evidence from the National Lung Screening Trial that screening with low-dose CT reduces lung cancer deaths, the combination of advances in screening technologies and treatment methods offers the ability to substantially reduce lung cancer death rates. Medicare and most private insurers cover screening.

"This is a unique moment in time when we can dramatically change the standard for how we approach reducing death from lung cancer," said Richard C. Wender, MD, Chief Cancer Control Officer for the American Cancer Society. "It's no longer just about tobacco control, which remains vitally important. Now, screening also has an essential role to play. Our goal is to reach high-risk individuals and their health care providers to ensure screening is part of their regular health care conversations. Screening is not for everyone, but it must be a priority for those who are at high risk."

Smoking causes about 80 percent of lung cancer deaths, and those at highest risk of lung cancer are those who have smoked the most. The American Cancer Society and other organizations recommend lung cancer screening for healthy patients beginning at age 55 who have at least a 30 pack-year smoking history, calculated by multiplying the average number of packs of cigarettes smoked per day by the number of years a person has smoked. Medicare will cover screening for adults in good health up to age 77, and private health plans will cover screening up to age 80. Current smokers should also receive smoking cessation counseling.

The National Lung Cancer Roundtable will bring together the key groups that, collectively, have the power to make screening a nationwide priority, have a meaningful impact to increase screening rates among high-risk populations and assure that the highest quality screening is standard across the country. The roundtable will create a common agenda and strategy across all groups. Member organizations will then engage in joint activities as well as work within their own spheres of influences to implement those strategies and bring about change.

Roundtable members include health organizations, such as radiological, surgical, pulmonology, and primary care organizations; advocacy groups; corporate entities and health insurers; and federal and state agencies. AstraZeneca is funding the first three years of the project at $1.5 million.

While the roundtable's primary focus is increasing screening among high-risk populations, it will also work to ensure those who are diagnosed with lung cancer receive timely, patient-centered, state-of-the-art care during all stages of the disease. The Roundtable will address not only the broad spectrum of issues associated with screening, but also the importance of assuring accurate staging and treatment planning, including molecular testing to better identify appropriate therapies

"AstraZeneca's vision is to change the treatment paradigm for lung cancer, including earlier diagnoses and better identification of the right patients for the right treatments at the right time," said Michelle C. Werner, Vice President, U.S. Oncology, at AstraZeneca. "We are proud to support the National Lung Cancer Roundtable as well as the collective expertise and shared commitment of leading organizations to better understand best practices for lung cancer screening and testing, insurance coverage requirements and costs, and policy

requirements. Collaboration is essential to improving the care and outcomes for lung cancer patients."

Members of the roundtable share the optimism about the impact the coalition can have:

Dr. Ella A. Kazerooni, Professor of Radiology at the University of Michigan, and Chair of the roundtable: "As we sit on the precipice of implementing widespread safe, quality and effective lung cancer screening across the United States for the deadliest cancer, I look forward to shaping a future through this collaboration, where a diagnosis of lung cancer is no longer received as a death sentence, but instead when caught early through screening, becomes a treatable and survivable cancer. To see this in my lifetime is now achievable."

Dr. Douglas E. Wood, Chief of the Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery and Vice-Chair of the roundtable: “The implementation of lung cancer screening offers an enormous opportunity to address health-care disparities in the United States. Lung cancer patients are older, have a lower socioeconomic status, and have worse outcomes in certain racial minorities. Lung cancer screening offers the largest opportunity to improve outcomes for lung cancer patients in a generation. The expertise of the roundtable will help us overcome barriers and improve processes on behalf of our patients.”

Dr. Peter Mazzone, a pulmonologist and Director of the Lung Cancer Program and Lung Cancer Screening Program for the Respiratory Institute at the Cleveland Clinic and a roundtable Steering Committee member: "This is a great opportunity for specialists and primary providers with an interest in lung cancer to develop programs that will accelerate the implementation of high quality early detection programs across the country."

Laurie Fenton Ambrose, President and CEO, Lung Cancer Alliance, and a roundtable Steering Committee member: "We are proud to be a part of the National Lung Cancer Roundtable. Screening those at risk has been a core priority of ours for many years and we view this collaboration with like-minded partners as nothing short of a win-win for our community. Lung cancer screening can save thousands of lives each year, which is why this ongoing dialogue and collaboration on high-priority activities focused on delivering best practices and equitable access to high-quality screening within the continuum of care are not just timely – but essential to reducing lung cancer mortality."

SOURCE American Cancer Society

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