More Than 12 Percent of Newly Diagnosed Lung Cancer Patients in the US Never Smoked Cigarettes According to New Population-Based Study

A new population-based study finds that more than 12 percent of lung cancer patients in the United States never smoked cigarettes. Since the majority of people newly diagnosed with lung cancer have smoked, or still do, the authors reinforce the need to strengthen programs and policies to increase cigarette cessation and lung cancer screening uptake among high-risk current and former smokers. These findings come from a research letter by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American Cancer Society (ACS) and appears in *JAMA Oncology*.

To examine the proportion of never smokers among persons newly diagnosed with lung cancer during 2011-2016, investigators evaluated demographic and clinical characteristics using the cancer registry population-based data from seven U.S. states. Results found that more than 84% of women and 90% of men with a new diagnosis of lung cancer had ever smoked, with about half of patients aged 20 to 64 years being current smokers. Among patients aged 65-79 years, about 33% were current smokers and about 86%-91% had smoked at some point in their lives or still smoke. For all ages combined, proportions of current smokers were higher for Black than white or Hispanic patients.

The investigators also found a higher proportion of never smokers occurred among female than male patients with lung cancer across all age groups, race/ethnicities, and types of cancer.

“These high proportion of ever smokers among both men and women newly diagnosed with lung cancer reinforce the importance of strengthening state and federal tobacco control policies to promote cessation,” said Ahmedin Jemal, DVM, PhD, American Cancer Society.

“The significance of this study offers new insight to previous studies that reported increases in the proportion of US and UK lung cancer patients who never smoked cigarettes. These previous studies were based on small sample sizes from hospital data rather than population-based cancer registries,” said lead author, David A. Siegel, MD, MPH, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Our results are based on large, population-based and geographically diverse data and may be more generalizable than those from smaller and local hospital-based datasets.”

Article: Siegel DA, Fedewa SA, Henley SJ, Pollack LA, Jemal A. Proportion of Never Smokers Among Men and Women with Lung Cancer in 7 US States; JAMA Oncology. doi:10.1001/jamaoncol.2020.6362.

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