

H21 Screening for Lung Cancer

May 2007

Intro: Research has shown that for some cancers, screening for early detection most definitely saves lives. Examples are mammograms for breast cancer and colonoscopy for colon cancer. But not all cancers have screening tools that have been proven to work. Let's go to Mayo Clinic to learn more about screening for lung cancer.

Video

Total running time 1:56

James Jett, M.D.
Mayo Clinic

James Jett, M.D.

Audio

WE'VE ALL HEARD AND SEEN THE WARNINGS. SMOKING CAUSES UP TO 90-PERCENT OF ALL LUNG CANCERS. BUT ROUGHLY ONE OUT OF FOUR ADULTS IN THE US AND CANADA STILL LIGHTS UP. AND PEOPLE WHO ARE LIFE LONG SMOKERS ARE AT SIGNIFICANT RISK.

"THEIR CHANCE OF GETTING LUNG CANCER IS ABOUT 15%."

DR. JAMES JETT AND COLLEAGUES AT MAYO CLINIC ARE STUDYING SCREENING TOOLS THAT MAY HELP DETECT LUNG CANCER EARLY WHILE IT'S STILL CURABLE.

"WAY TOO MANY AMERICANS ARE

Mayo Clinic

DYING OF THIS DISEASE:

APPROXIMATELY 160-THOUSAND

DEATHS THIS YEAR IN THE U.S.

ALONE.”

THE SCREENING TOOL THAT MAY

SEEM TO HOLD THE MOST

PROMISE IS THE SPIRAL CT SCAN.

“I’LL LET YOU KNOW WHEN TO

HOLD YOUR BREATH.”

THIS MACHINE TAKES PICTURES

OF YOUR LUNGS IN SLICES LIKE A

LOAF OF BREAD. IT CAN DETECT

TUMORS AS SMALL AS A GRAIN OF

RICE. IT SPOTS MANY MORE

ABNORMALITIES THAN THE CHEST

X-RAY.

James Jett, M.D.

Mayo Clinic

“YOU DON’T SEE THE CANCER ON

THAT BUT ON THE CT SCAN THIS

NODULE HERE IS THE CANCER.”

Standup

Vivien Williams

Reporting

BUT DR. JETT SAYS JUST BECAUSE

THE CT SCAN PICKS UP MORE

SPOTS DOESN’T MEAN IT SAVES

LIVES. IN FACT HIS RECENT PAPER

IN THE JOURNAL OF THE
AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
REPORTS THAT WHILE CT
SCREENING DETECTED MORE
LUNG CANCERS AT AN EARLIER
STAGE, THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE
WHO DIED OF THE DISEASE
REMAINED THE SAME. PERHAPS
CT SCREENING DOES NOT DETECT
CANCER EARLY ENOUGH. PLUS
SOME PEOPLE IN THE STUDY HAD
UNNECESSARY SURGERIES TO
REMOVE NODULES THAT WERE
NOT MALIGNANT. SO IF YOU'RE A
SMOKER AT RISK OF CANCER
SHOULD YOU GET SCREENED? DR.
JETT SAYS AT THIS POINT THERE
IS NO PROOF THAT A CT SCAN
WILL SAVE YOUR LIFE. BUT HE'S
INVOLVED IN ANOTHER LARGER
STUDY THAT WILL HOPEFULLY
GIVE A DEFINITIVE ANSWER.
"I'M HOPEFUL IT WILL BE A

James Jett, M.D.

POSITIVE STUDY WHERE IT WILL
SHOW SOME DECREASE IN THE
NUMBER OF PATIENTS DYING.”
FOR MEDICAL EDGE, I’M VIVIEN
WILLIAMS.

Anchor tag:

Until the large-scale randomized control trial is complete, Dr. Jett suggests people at high risk talk to their doctors about the benefits and risks of screening. Right now there is no major health care organization advocating CT screening for lung cancer. These groups are waiting until results are in from the large trial.

In addition to CT screening, researchers are looking at blood tests and chemicals in exhaled breath as ways to detect lung cancer. For more information, visit our Website at...

STATIONS: Per the licensing agreement, please provide a link from your station's website to <http://www.mayoclinic.org> or voice tag "mayoclinic.org" for more information.]