



The Society
of Thoracic
Surgeons



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

Medicare CT Screening Coverage Can Make This the Most Effective Lung Cancer Awareness Month Ever

Washington, DC (Nov. 3, 2014) – Lung Cancer Awareness Month this year is different and may be the most significant in history. By Nov. 10, Medicare must rule on coverage for [computed tomography \(CT\) lung cancer screening](#) – the first and only test proven to [reduce](#) lung cancer deaths. If Medicare will fully cover this exam for seniors at high risk for the disease, we can complete the first major blow against the nation's [leading cancer killer](#).

An unprecedented coalition of medical, professional and public health leaders [has called on](#) the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to fully cover these exams.

“Lung cancer takes more lives each year than breast, prostate and colon cancer combined. As such, CT lung cancer screening can save more lives than any single cancer test in history. However, Medicare must ensure access to these exams by providing full coverage for them,” **said Laurie Fenton Ambrose, president and chief executive officer of the Lung Cancer Alliance.**

CT lung cancer screening [works as well](#) in people age 65 and over as it does in those 50-64. It is cost effective [in Medicare](#) and [privately insured](#) patients. There is no [undue or lasting anxiety](#) from this screening.

“More than 220,000 people will be diagnosed with lung cancer this year. Nearly 160,000 people will die from the disease. Armed with this proven test, and the access to these exams that full Medicare coverage would provide, we can save tens of thousands of these people,” **said Douglas E. Wood, M.D., immediate past president of The Society of Thoracic Surgeons.**

The [United States Preventive Services Task Force \(USPSTF\) recommended](#) (with a Grade of “B”) CT lung cancer screening of adults aged 55-80 who have a 30 pack-year smoking history and currently smoke or have quit within the past 15 years. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires private insurers to cover exams that receive a USPSTF grade of “B” or higher. The ACA does not specify that Medicare beneficiaries receive full coverage for these services.

Significant lung cancer screening infrastructure is growing. The [American College of Radiology Lung Cancer Screening Center program](#) helps ensure these exams are provided safely and effectively. ACR [Lung-RADS](#) standardizes CT lung cancer screening reporting and management, aids lung CT interpretation and supports outcomes monitoring.

““Medical experts and patient advocates [have outlined](#) to Medicare the infrastructure and quality assurance programs in place. Questions regarding CT lung cancer screening effectiveness, cost and patient acceptance are answered. It is time Medicare to move forward with full coverage,” **said Ella Kazerooni, M.D., FACR, chair of the American College of Radiology Lung Cancer Screening Committee and ACR Thoracic Imaging Panel.**

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To speak with Dr. Kazerooni, contact Shawn Farley at 703-648-8936 or PR@acr.org.

To speak with Dr. Wood, contact Cassie McNulty at 312-202-5865 or cmcnulty@sts.org.

To speak with Ms. Ambrose, contact Kay Cofrancesco at 302-521-5716 or kay@lungcanceralliance.org.