

LCA hails Veterans Service Organizations' call for early lung cancer detection program

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

Program would fund screening for veterans at risk for lung cancer

Lung Cancer Alliance (LCA) today hailed veterans service organizations for calling on Congress to fund a lung cancer early detection pilot program specifically for veterans at high risk for lung cancer.

LCA President Laurie Fenton called the request "ground-breaking."

"This is a critical turning point that will benefit all of our veterans who are at higher risk for lung cancer due to higher government-subsidized smoking rates and increased exposure during active duty to asbestos on submarines, Agent Orange, depleted nuclear fuels, and other carcinogens."

Fenton praises AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, the Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars for their public recognition of the devastating impact of lung cancer on veterans by requesting Congress to fund a \$3 million pilot screening program based on the highly successful research carried out by the International Early Lung Cancer Action Program.

Lung cancer is the biggest cancer killer, taking more lives each year than breast, prostate, colon, kidney and liver cancers combined. Most people will die within the first year of diagnosis because only 16 percent of lung cancer cases are being caught at an early stage when treatment is most effective.

Vietnam veterans are at especially high risk because of their exposure to carcinogens and because the percentage of these veterans who are current or former smokers is twice the national civilian rate.

Meanwhile, over the past 13 years, the I-ELCAP early detection research program -- which was initiated in 1993 at Cornell Medical School in New York and carried out in 40 sites around the world -- has led to the development of protocol that has detected lung cancer at an early stage 85 percent of the time and led to 10-year survival of 92 percent in those treated immediately upon diagnosis. Without early detection, 5-year survival rates drop below 15 percent.

"We owe our veterans, especially Vietnam veterans who have been the most severely impacted by lung cancer, the very best care available," Fenton continued.

Every year since 1986, AMVETS, DAV, PVA and VFW have presented policy recommendations to Congress in their Independent Budget. For the first time, the IB specifically includes a recommendation on lung cancer, stating:

-- VA should request and Congress should appropriate at least \$3 million to conduct a pilot screening program for veterans at high risk of developing lung cancer;

-- VA should partner with the International Early Lung Cancer Action Program to provide early screening of veterans at risk.

"We congratulate these organizations for their call to action and look forward to working with them to bring this early detection program to our veterans," concluded Fenton.

The Lung Cancer Alliance is the only national non-profit organization solely dedicated to patient support and advocacy for people living with, or at risk for, lung cancer. As the number one cancer killer, lung cancer will kill more than 160,000 Americans this year alone, causing more deaths than breast, prostate, colon, liver, kidney cancers and melanoma combined.

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