

Eisenhower Recognizes Lung Cancer Awareness Month

November is recognized nationally as Lung Cancer Awareness Month — 30 days to focus on raising awareness and providing education about lung cancer prevention and treatment.

Although lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related death for both men and women, there is hope on the horizon, according to Eisenhower medical oncologist Davood Vafai, MD. Although the disease is rare among people under the age of 45, more people die from lung cancer than from colon, breast and prostate cancers combined. These numbers include both smokers and non-smokers; however, the risks are much greater for smokers.



Despite the grim statistics, Dr. Vafai points out several recent developments that give him hope for the future.

One treatment option under study includes pills that can block cancer cells from forming, called genetic alteration, which identifies the gene that makes normal cells become cancerous. "If we block the pathway, the cancer cells die," he said. "As time goes by, with more research, we can find more genetic pathways that can target different cancer cells."

On another research front, "We are finding new therapies to boost your own immune system to fight cancer, which may not cure cancer but will buy time," he said.

"The best chance to cure cancer is early detection," says Dr. Vafai. "The use of Computerized Tomography, or CT scans, is the new standard for detecting cancer while still in its early stages. The CT scan is a vast improvement over chest X-rays, which have been used for years. With the CT scan, which can detect cancer cells in smaller, early states, we have seen historic progress in the cancer field — a 20 percent reduction in lung cancer deaths," according to Dr. Vafai.

Are You At Risk?

According to the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, common risk factors include:

- Tobacco smoking
- Contact with radon, a gas without odor, taste or color
- Contact with asbestos
- Having had other cancers
- Family history of lung cancer

- Having had other lung diseases
- Contact with second-hand smoke

Eisenhower Lucy Curci Cancer Center is offering Smoking Cessation classes at the Cancer Center and at The LGBT Community Center of the Desert, Palm Springs at \$100 for the six-week series. For reservations or information, call 760-834-3798 or visit emc.org/calender.

Note: Quotations by Dr. Vafai from The Desert Sun, 11/8/12, Section D1

HealthNotes is a publication of Eisenhower Medical Center · © Copyright 2015 All Rights Reserved · www.emc.org