

Early detection of lung cancer

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New data from several studies evaluating new techniques for early diagnosis and treatment of lung cancer are being presented at the first European Multidisciplinary Conference on Thoracic Oncology (EMCTO) in Lugano, Switzerland (1-3 May 2009).

"Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths worldwide and also in Europe. One of the reasons for this is that symptoms of lung cancer are very often lacking or occur only late in the course of the disease," said Prof Rudolf M. Huber from the University of Munich in Germany.

"The prognosis of lung cancer patients is very dependent on how advanced their disease is. In stage I for example, where the tumour has not yet spread, 5-year-survival rates are about 70%; whereas in stage IV, where it has metastasised to other parts of the body, survival is about 1%. Even for patients with locally advanced tumours, survival over 5 years is only about 10%. Therefore every effort should be undertaken to diagnose early in the course of the disease."

"Developing better tools for distinguishing between [lung cancer](#) and other [lung diseases](#) will help us offer greater hope for patients," added Prof Huber.

In one study presented at the conference, Italian researchers compare two computed tomography techniques for diagnosing indeterminate lung lesions, finding that a form of single-photon emission computed tomography could offer an alternative method in situations where positron emission tomography is not available.

In another abstract, UK scientists report that a new approach to diagnosis that ensures a patient has had a chest CT scan before they attend a clinic has the potential to reduce the time between their first abnormal chest X-ray and final diagnosis.

Also during the conference, Greek investigators suggest that they may have found a new factor that will help indicate a patient's prognosis at the time of diagnosis. Their work indicates that the expression of specific cell surface molecules on [tumour cells](#) correlates with clinical parameters. The results "could comprise a promising prognostic factor in lung carcinomas, thus presenting exciting possibilities for the future."

Source: European Society for Medical Oncology

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