

Possible advance for some late-stage lung cancer patients

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Surgical biopsy could pave way for targeted treatments, study says.

(HealthDay)—Surgical biopsy is safe for certain late-stage lung cancer patients and could improve their chances of getting treated with newer types of drugs that target cancer-related genetic mutations, a new small study reveals.

In many cases, [surgical biopsy](#) is too dangerous for these [patients](#), so less-invasive methods are used, including fine-needle aspiration and core needle biopsies. However, these less invasive techniques sometimes gather too few tumor cells to perform the molecular testing needed to prescribe newer targeted drugs, the researchers said.

Their study included 25 patients with late-stage non-small cell lung cancer who had surgical biopsies. Most of the biopsies were performed

using video-assisted surgery that requires general anesthesia but only small incisions.

Five patients experienced a complication, three of which were minor. Surgical biopsy identified potentially targetable [genetic mutations](#) in 19 of the 25 patients, and changed the treatment strategy in more than half.

Ten of the 19 patients were determined to be eligible for enrollment in a clinical trial of targeted drug treatment, according to the study in the July issue of the *Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery*.

"We will be allowing more people to be eligible for clinical trials, and ultimately that will provide value to the patient and access to treatments they may not have had otherwise," lead author David Cooke, head of general thoracic surgery at the University of California, Davis Medical Center, said in a university news release.

However, surgical biopsy should be used on a late-stage [lung cancer](#) patient only after the case has been reviewed by a team of experts, including lung and cancer specialists, a radiologist and surgeon, he said.

More information: The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more about [lung cancer](#).

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