

Lung cancer will remain major health issue, despite falling rates

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Smoking-related lung cancer rates are expected to drop dramatically over the next 50 years, but lung cancer will continue to be a significant health problem in the United States, says a University of Michigan researcher.

Under the most optimistic scenario, rates could drop by 81 percent, while under the most pessimistic scenario, rates would fall by 75 percent from 2015 to 2065.

Rafael Meza, associate professor at the University of Michigan's School of Public Health, and colleagues at the Cancer Intervention and Surveillance Modeling Network, utilized four independent models to project [lung](#) cancer rates for U.S. men and women aged 30 to 84 from 1964 to 2065. All models projected the impact of changes in [smoking prevalence](#) since the 1960s on past and future lung cancer mortality.

"We found that future smoking and lung cancer rates and deaths will continue to decrease," said Meza, who is the coordinating principal investigator of the CISNET Lung group, adding those decreases are the result of [tobacco control](#) measures implemented until now.

The study, he says, did not consider any potential changes in smoking prevalence that might occur due to the adoption of e-cigarettes or polytobacco use.

According to the findings:

- The number of annual deaths (in those aged 30 to 84) will decrease from 135,000 in 2015 to 50,000 in 2065.
- Despite those gains, there will be 4.4 million deaths from lung cancer in the U.S. from 2015 to 2065.
- Lung cancer will remain a significant health problem in the U.S., with an increasing number and proportion occurring among those who have never smoked.

The study demonstrates that tobacco control is helping to reduce the burden of lung cancer in the U.S. but also that smoking will continue to

be an important determinant of lung cancer risk during this century, according to Jihyoun Jeon, first author of the study and a researcher the School of Public Health.

"Even though lung cancer death rates among never smokers are expected to remain roughly the same in the future, the proportion of never smokers will grow in the U.S. population, which will result in a greater portion of lung [cancer](#) deaths to come from never smokers," Jeon said. "This highlights the need for new research on [lung cancer](#) risk among never smokers and for the development of prevention strategies geared towards them."

Meza says that continued policies and measures to discourage the uptake of [smoking](#) in youth and to promote cessation in current [smokers](#) are needed to retain and expand the gains that have already been made.

The study is published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

More information: Smoking and Lung Cancer Mortality in the United States From 2015 to 2065: A Comparative Modeling Approach. *Ann Intern Med.* 2018; [DOI: 10.7326/M18-1250](https://doi.org/10.7326/M18-1250)

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