Experts Call For Smoking Cessation After Cancer Diagnosis

The International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer made the declaration at the outset of a major cancer meeting in Barcelona.

September 10, 2019 By Benjamin Ryan

The International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer (IASLC) has issued a declaration calling for clinicians to screen people diagnosed with cancer for smoking, encourage those who do smoke to quit and to assist them in doing so.

The IASLC made this declaration at the outset of the 2019 World Conference on Lung Cancer in Barcelona, the largest international lung cancer meeting.

After receiving a cancer diagnosis, people have a higher risk of death and of developing a second cancer if they continue to smoke. Additionally, persistent smoking after such a diagnosis drives up the cost of treatment.

The declaration is the product of work by the IASLC Tobacco Control and Smoking Cessation Committee, which hopes to promote greater involvement by physicians in efforts to curb smoking among those with cancer in particular.

“For too long this has been a neglected problem in the education of health professionals,” Jace Jassem, MD, PhD, of the Medical University of Gdansk in Poland, said in an IASLC press release. Many physicians still believe that it is too late to offer smoking cessation support at cancer diagnosis. Likewise, most patients believe that there is nothing to be gained from quitting once being diagnosed.”

The declaration’s recommendations include:

- Clinicians should screen all patients with cancer for tobacco use and counsel smokers on the benefits of quitting.
- Those patients who continue to smoke after being diagnosed with cancer, as well as their family members, should receive routine evidence-based tobacco cessation assistance that is integrated into their multidisciplinary cancer care.

- Educational programs that patients receive regarding cancer management should include tobacco cessation training, as well as empathetic communication with them about their history of smoking. The patients should have access to evidence-based tobacco cessation resources.
- Insurers should reimburse smoking cessation counseling.
- It should be required for prospective clinical studies to include data on smoking status among participants.
- Those designing clinical trials of individuals with cancer should consider designs that investigate the efficacy of tobacco cessation interventions.

The IASLC committee has also partnered this month with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the National Cancer Institute, the American Association for Cancer Research and the American Society of Clinical Oncology to discuss the importance of collecting data about smoking in clinical trials. As it happens, there are only a few prospective clinical trials currently running that are investigating smoking cessation following a cancer diagnosis.

To read the declaration, click here.

To see the WCLC meeting program, click here

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