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Lung cancer test

First patients have taken part in early detection trial.

Patients in Scotland have become the first in the UK to trial a simple blood test that could identify lung cancer at an earlier stage.

As part of a pilot project, 60 patients have already taken part in the ground breaking study.

New patients are being sought to take part in the trial, which if successful, could be rolled out across Scotland.

Patients at highest risk of lung cancer, such as smokers and ex-smokers, are being offered the new EarlyCDT[®]-Lung test which detects levels of certain substances in the blood known as autoantibodies, which are produced by the body when cancer develops.

It could lead to cancer being detected months or even years earlier than it would otherwise be diagnosed. Where increased levels of autoantibodies are detected, patients will be referred for an chest x-ray and CT scan to determine whether they have cancer. If cancer is detected then patients will be offered NHS treatment and support.

Cabinet Secretary for Health Alex Neil said:

"The Scottish Government is committed to increasing early detection of cancer.

"By diagnosing lung cancer at its earliest possible stage, we stand a better chance of being able to treat it successfully, using less aggressive treatments and improving life expectancy.

"This study demonstrates our commitment for Scotland to continue to be at the forefront of diagnostic tests for lung cancer.

"If the trial demonstrates better outcomes for those who are tested it will provide good evidence that a population screening programme would be beneficial.

"I would encourage people who are invited to take part in the study to do so as it is important that we have sufficient people involved to make the results valid"

Bill Culbard, 70, a retired police officer, knows how important early detection is and is backing the study.

In Spring 2000 Bill was diagnosed with advanced and inoperable lung cancer. However after nine months chemo and radiotherapy treatment at the Beatson Oncology Centre in Glasgow Bill made a strong recovery – even returning to

work as a security officer that December.

Thirteen years on Bill, who is married with children, is encouraged by the early detection trial underway in Scotland. Since his diagnosis he has volunteered with Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation and been a patient research assistant/advisor with Stirling Cancer Care Research Centre.

Talking about his lung cancer treatment, Bill said:

“I came out of it pretty good and am in a fortunate position to pay something back into the system that saved me.

“I am hopeful that this screening trial will improve early detection. I know having been a smoker most of my adult life that I was slow to go to the doctor with a recurring cough and sore throat. I knew at the back of my mind about lung cancer but I didn’t expect it to happen to me. Now I think why not me?

“Hopefully screening and more awareness about paying attention and going to your GP will mean more people with lung cancer can share their stories 13 years on.”

The study supports the Scottish Government’s Detect Cancer Early programme, which aims to increase the early detection of cancer by 25 per cent.

It aims to recruit up to 10,000 people in the Greater Glasgow & Clyde and Tayside NHS Board areas. Half of the participants will be offered the test and half will not, then long-term outcomes of all will be followed-up and compared.

The team will also ask patients what they think about the test to help inform future decisions around offering it as a national lung cancer screening test.

Scotland has one of the highest rates of lung cancer in the world, with fewer than 9% of patients still alive five years after diagnosis. Lung cancer kills more people than any other cancer. In Scotland 5000 people die from lung cancer every year. This is because most cases are picked up at a later stage when the chance of cure is low. This is often because there are few symptoms until the cancer has been growing for a long time.

Notes To Editors

Scottish Government is co-funding the Early Cancer Detection test – Lung cancer Scotland (ECLS) along with Oncimmune Ltd, the company who have developed the EarlyCDT-Lung test that is being trialled in the study.

Early in the development of a solid tumour cancer, the body mounts an immune response to certain by-products from cancer cells, by producing autoantibodies. These autoantibodies can rise in the earliest stages of cancer and can be measured in an individual’s blood. EarlyCDT-Lung has been developed to measure a panel of 7 autoantibodies associated specifically with lung cancer.

The test has been developed so that individuals at high risk of developing lung cancer can benefit from an increasing chance that lung cancer can be detected at the earliest possible stages, when treatment can be most successful. People who have a positive blood test will be offered a chest x-ray and a CT scan to further

determine whether a cancer is present if it is then they will be treated as per usual NHS care.

The researchers will track what happens to everyone in the study for 10 years to see if anyone gets cancer. The long term outcomes will then be used to determine whether the test is effective as a screening tool.

The trial is being run in Tayside and Glasgow - people in other parts of the country will continue to be offered the best current clinical care. Until well-designed trials have been carried out, there is insufficient evidence to know if a procedure is both effective and safe.

- <http://www.eclsstudy.org/home>

information on EarlyCDT-Lung and Oncimmune is available at –
<http://www.earlycdt-lung.co.uk>

The Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation gives help and hope to people affected by lung cancer. The charity has two aims- saving lives and supporting people living with lung cancer. www.roycastle.org or phone their Freephone helpline on 0333 323 7200 - option 2.

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