



# Lung Screening Programs and the Effectiveness of the Lung Screening Navigator



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**ABSTRACT:** Since the initiation of the OhioHealth Lung Cancer Screening Program (Columbus, Ohio) in July 2013, 1,123 patients have completed the screening process. This article describes the process of the program, incidence of lung cancer in women screened in the program and how the lung nurse navigator is a part of the process. The goal is to continue to promote lung cancer screening so that we will detect lung cancers much earlier than before in hopes of improving lung cancer long term survival rates." The role of the nurse navigator in lung cancer screening is very important in helping the patient through the process and communicating with the physician. (*J Radiol Nurs* 2016;35:138-141.)

**KEYWORDS:** Lung Cancer Screening; Nurse navigators; Women's health; Low Dose CT Scan.

In the United States, lung cancer in men and women is considered the leading cause of cancer death and the second most common diagnosed cancer (Henley et al., 2014). In 2015, approximately 221,200 new cases of lung cancer were diagnosed among men and women according to the American Cancer Society (What are the key statistics about lung cancer?, 2015). In Columbus, OH, OhioHealth implemented a lung cancer screening program on July 22, 2013 with a goal of early detection and possible cure if the cancer was found in an early stage (N.A. (a), 2015). There are similar programs throughout the United States with the same

goal. OhioHealth is one of the largest health systems in Ohio. OhioHealth Hospital System is comprised of a family of not-for-profit, faith-based hospitals and health care organizations, including 13 hospitals and health centers, imaging/radiology services, mammography centers, outpatient facilities, urgent care centers, and many more serving patients in central and north central Ohio since 1891.

This article will describe the process of our program, incidence of lung cancer in women screened in the program, how the lung nurse navigator is a part of the process, smoking cessation importance, and examples of advertising targeting women to become or continue to be smokers.

## LUNG CANCER SCREENING ELIGIBILITY AND THE LUNG NURSE NAVIGATOR ROLE

The center of our program is the dedicated team of oncology lung nurse navigators. Each facility across OhioHealth that performs lung cancer screenings has an assigned nurse navigator. Lung nurse navigators are experienced oncology nurses with effective communication and organizational skills. Nurse navigation is especially vital in the care coordination of high-risk patients. The navigator role is to help facilitate processes that will improve patient outcomes such as bridging the gap between early detection and diagnosis. Trust and empathy are key to

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allowing the nurse navigator to join with the patient in moving the patient toward a healthier lifestyle. As a nurse navigator, linking that chasm to reach the patient may be the most important part of the role.

In the lung cancer screening venue, lung nurse navigators perform pre-enrollment and risk assessments to ensure patient eligibility. Eligibility for the low-dose computed tomography (CT) scan (LDCT) of the chest has changed from the original study in 2002 (National Lung Screening Trial: Questions and Answers, 2014), and National Lung Screening Trial, to the current guidelines approved by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) (U.S. Preventative Services, 2015). The current age requirement is 55-77 years of age, minimum of 30-pack year history, and being a current smoker or former smoker who quit within the last 15 years. Two additional requirements include not having any signs or symptoms of lung cancer and shared decision-making with a qualified medical professional including physician, physician assistant, clinical nurse specialist, or nurse practitioner. This conversation should include the topics of further testing, false positives, radiation exposure, possible emotional distress from actively screening for an abnormality, and smoking cessation.

Once a patient is deemed eligible, the nurse navigator meets the patient in person on the day of their scheduled scan appointment to provide education about risk reduction, smoking cessation, and future follow-up. The nurse also has the patient view an educational video that was created by our multidisciplinary team. This video provides additional information on the importance of screening, compliance, and smoking cessation (Jansak et al., 2014). After the scan is completed, the nurse navigator communicates the findings to the ordering physician and works to coordinate any necessary follow-up. The nurse navigator then tracks all findings and future appointments through a navigational focus data base (Jansak et al., 2014).

Lung nurse navigators open the door to objective evaluation of the lungs of the patient through the imaging process and then try to partner with them in finding the desire and method most effective to help them move toward successful smoking cessation, if they are smokers. Historically, individuals who have been unable or unwilling to quit smoking have been the recipients of harsh criticism and segregation from the general public. In the OhioHealth system, there are tobacco treatment specialists (TTS) at each campus for those who are ready to quit smoking. Through the help of a TOSHIBA grant, we were able to send each lung nurse navigator to a week-long training program to be a certified TTS. The goal for 2016 is that each campus is able to offer 4 cessation classes throughout

the year. In addition, there are currently a wide variety of aids available to assist with smoking cessation, ranging from traditional weekly classes held by local hospitals and clinics, to online websites and even smart phone apps. It is an integrated part of the lung screening program at OhioHealth to assess readiness and provide links to the resources available.

### ADVERTISING, WOMEN, AND SMOKING

Lung cancer is the leading cause of death in women and is a disease primarily caused by cigarette smoking. Since the 1950s there has been a 600-percent rise in women's mortality rates (Egelston, 2009). According to the Center for Disease Control, nearly 15 of every 100 adult women were smokers in the United States in the year 2014 (Henley et al., 2014). Throughout the years, advertising has had a large impact on smokers, and with women, the focus of the variety of advertisements has been on the glamor, sexiness, weight, and diet. In 1927, the Chesterfield cigarette company started the "Blow My Way" campaign. A description of this ad in the New York Times in 1928 described it as a subtle suggestion for a woman to smoke and that she is asking the man to blow the smoke in her direction (NA (b), 2015). Many cigarette brands continued the thinly veiled advertising in coming years by no longer selling the hint of smoking and instead directly targeting women to broaden the sales market and increase overall sales. Over the years, additional campaign names such as "You're so smart," "Keep Kissable," and "Pretty in Pink" to name a few have worked to target women to smoke (N.A. (c), NA).

Voices of women who have spoken out about their battle with lung cancer include Dana Reeve, the wife of Christopher Reeve who was the star of the Superman movies and Valerie Harper, famous for her television role of Rhoda on the Mary Tyler Moore Show. Dana was a nonsmoker and Valerie is a previous smoker. Sadly, Dana died from her lung cancer but Valerie continues to fight on. In current times, singer and songwriter Jewel has lent her voice to the prevention of lung cancer through Lungforce ([www.lungforce.org](http://www.lungforce.org)) in association with the American Lung Association. She has written and performed the song, "Sing On," available on the LungForce website <http://www.lungforce.org/search/node/sing%20by%20jewel>. All proceeds from that song go toward research and to help raise awareness about lung cancer ('Sing on' with Jewel and LungForce, 2015).

### WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE ON LUNG CANCER SCREENING

Since the initiation of our Lung Cancer Screening Program in July 2013, 1,123 patients have been screened.

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