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LUNG CANCER ALLIANCE MAINTAINS STRONG SUPPORT FOR EARLY DETECTION FOR LUNG CANCER

*Advocacy Group Responds to New CT Scanning Study in March 7 Issue of
Journal of the American Medical Association*

Washington, DC [March 6, 2007] – Today, Lung Cancer Alliance President, Laurie Fenton, responded to the most recent criticism of CT screening, calling it “another delaying tactic to deny people at high risk for lung cancer the chance to have it detected at an early, treatable stage.”

“Hundreds of thousands of lives are at stake here,” said Fenton. “Lung cancer has been so ignored, so stigmatized, and under-researched that it is killing more people each year than all the other major cancers combined.”

“The only hope that people at high risk for lung cancer have of beating this disease is to do what we have done for other cancers, and that is to find it early when it can be treated and cured,” Fenton continued.

Breast, prostate and colon cancers, which have widely accepted screening tests, now have five year survival rates of 88 percent, 99 percent, and 65 percent, respectively. Currently, without screening, more than 70 percent of lung cancer patients are being diagnosed so late that death occurs within months. The five year survival rate for lung cancer patients is still only 15 percent.

An article published in the March 7 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* concludes that high risk individuals should not be screened for lung cancer until more studies have been conducted, as the authors claim CT scans may cause more harm than good.

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NO MORE EXCUSES. NO MORE LUNG CANCER.

“This is not productive,” declared Fenton. “We have heard these same statistical arguments used for years to delay screening for breast cancer, and there are many in the medical community who are still debating mammograms for women in their 40s even after eight trials have been completed.”

“Why is lung cancer being held to a different standard?” continued Fenton. “We are talking about a high risk population and no one argues that CT scans can detect lung cancer at a very early stage, not even the authors of the article.”

“The issue is how to manage the suspicious nodules once they are found,” she said.

The longest and most comprehensive study conducted to date is the 13 year-long study of 30,000 individuals by the International Early Lung Cancer Action Program (I-ELCAP), which demonstrates that CT scans can detect lung cancer at its earliest stage 85 percent of the time. For those treated immediately, the chance of surviving ten years is 92 percent.

The cost of CT scans has fallen below \$200 retail, though most are still not covered by Medicare or insurance policies unless the patient already has symptoms. Once diagnosed, subsequent scans are covered.

“We stand by our position,” said Fenton. “If you are at risk for lung cancer, it is essential that you speak with your doctor about getting a CT scan. These scans should be conducted in a facility with experience in lung cancer, and include a multi-disciplinary team of doctors to confirm the diagnosis.”

Those at increased risk for developing lung cancer include former smokers, people with a history of lung cancer in the immediate family, those who have been exposed to smoke, asbestos, or other carcinogens, or were in active duty in the military – especially on submarine duty or exposed to Agent Orange, nuclear fuels or other cancer-causing materials.

The Lung Cancer Alliance (www.LungCancerAlliance.org) is the only national non-profit organization solely dedicated to patient support and advocacy for people living with, or at risk for, lung cancer. As the number one cancer killer, lung cancer will kill more than 160,000 Americans this year alone, causing more deaths than breast, prostate, colon, liver, kidney cancers and melanoma combined.

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