Patients' experiences of lung cancer during COVID-19

Insights from Australia

GLOBAL LUNG CANCER COALITION

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on patients, including those living with lung cancer, and healthcare systems around the world.

The Global Lung Cancer Coalition (GLCC), an alliance of 42 patient organisations from 30 countries across the world, wanted to understand if COVID-19 is still impacting the care patients receive, and to compare the experiences of patients in different countries.

In December 2021, the GLCC shared a **global online patient experience survey**.

The survey ran for eight weeks and received **555 responses** from patients across **21 countries**.

Key findings from Australia

Demographics

10 lung cancer patients or their carers responded

70% of respondents identified as female, **30%** identified as male

100% were diagnosed in the last **five years**

All the patients have non-small cell lung cancer

Treatment

Half of the responding patients are currently **having treatment** while the other half have **finished treatment**

Involvement in decisions

Eight of the ten patients said **they felt involved** in decisions about their treatment and care.
The other **two** said they **did not want to be** involved

Accessing information

Two patients said they got the **information they needed at the right time**. Six said they had to look for more information on their own. One said the information they received was given too late

Lung cancer screening

One patient said they were **aware** of a lung cancer screening programme in Australia, but the other nine patients were not aware of any programme

Nine out of ten responding patients said they **would attend** a screening appointment if invited. One patient was not sure if they would attend

Emotional impact

Getting the lung cancer diagnosis had the biggest emotional impact on patients.

More than half said they were **fearful of relapse** (56%) or **worried or depressed** about their health and future (56%)

Six out of nine patients had found it helpful to have support from a **therapist or counsellor**. Five out of nine had found it helpful to attend a group for people with lung cancer

Impact of COVID-19

All of the responding patients had received a vaccination against COVID-19

Two thirds (six of nine) said that their **treatment has continued** as normal during the pandemic. Four patients had continued to attend appointments, while three patients had their appointments swapped from face-to-face to virtual (telephone or video)

All patients said they would **prefer a face-to-face** appointment to find out their **diagnosis** and for the **first consultation**, and seven prefer in-person to discuss a change to treatment.
Four patients said they would prefer telephone if they were worried about something

Call to action

The members of the GLCC are calling for the implementation of the rights outlined in its Patient Charter, namely ensuring that all lung cancer patients have access to quality healthcare; informed self-determination, which includes involvement in decision-making; and physical and mental integrity.

More information

The GLCC's member in Australia is:

- Lung Foundation Australia: https://www.lungfoundation.com.au

For more information about this survey and the work of the GLCC, please visit our website: https://www.lungcancercoalition.org or email our secretariat at: glcc@roycastle.org