Insights from Australia

Patients’ experiences of lung cancer during COVID-19

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

Lung cancer screening

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

Emotional impact

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.

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).

Accessing information

- 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.
- All the patients have non-small cell lung cancer.

Treatments

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

Impact of COVID-19

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

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