

Lung cancer: prevent or treat?

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Abstract

Cancer is currently one of the most serious health problems of humanity, it is among the first as a cause of death in developed and developing countries, with a tendency to continue to rise and occupy the absolute first place for the year 2025 also, because its diagnosis is made in advanced stages, it is estimated that its incidence will double by the year 2030 as a result of population growth and aging and that it may affect all ages, even those fetuses.

Keywords: lung cancer; air pollution; primary health care

Introduction

Cancer is currently one of the most serious health problems of humanity, it is among the first as a cause of death in developed and developing countries, with a tendency to continue to rise and occupy the absolute first place for the year 2025 [1,2], also, because its diagnosis is made in advanced stages, it is estimated that its incidence will double by the year 2030 as a result of population growth and aging and that it may affect all ages, even those fetuses [3,4].

The locations that account for more than half of the mortality are the lung, prostate, breast, colon and cervix [1], with the lung being the most frequent of all [1,2].

Lung cancer (LC) is the main neoplastic cause of death in the world and one of the diseases of respiratory origin with the highest mortality, with a rate of 1,274 per 100,000 inhabitants, predominantly in men between 55 and 65 years of age; in women it is in a notable increase, which causes mortality to double. About 2,200 cases are diagnosed each year with rates of 32.6 and 12.4 per 100,000 for men and women in this regard, with high mortality during the first year after diagnosis. Only 20% of cases have localized disease, 25% have it spread to regional lymph nodes, and 55%

already suffer from distant metastases. Once diagnosed, they have a very poor prognosis, since only 15% of cases can be cured [5].

In Cuba in 2019, the highest mortality rate from cancer in both sexes corresponded to malignant tumors of the trachea, bronchi and lung, with 5,626 deaths for a rate of 50.1 per 100,000 inhabitants, being higher in the male sex in 1.3 with respect to the female sex [2,6].

The reduction in its incidence is affected by smoking, population aging, genetic predisposition, immunological factors, and air pollution [5]. The risk of developing lung cancer increases with the number of cigarettes smoked each day and the years of smoking, since the dose of carcinogens is cumulative [7]. On the other hand, the clinical presentation, the therapeutic attitude and the risks of surgical intervention have not changed much over the years. All this makes it a serious health problem and one of the most important at the moment [5].

Faced with such a dilemma, it is imperative that health services direct their actions towards prevention, acting on the modifiable risk factors that affect the appearance of this disease.

Primary Health Care (PHC) plays an important role in the prevention of lung cancer. It is the PHC, the first contact of the individuals, the family

and the community with the Health System and the greatest number of health care requirements arrive at it. In Cuba, primary health care covers the entire population and brings, as far as possible, health care to the places where people live and work and constitutes the first element of a permanent process of health care [8].

Smoking is the factor that can be most influenced at this level of care. It is the family medical office, a key link in the PHC, with its basic health team, made up of the family doctor and nurse, in charge of drawing up actions to modify modes and lifestyles in the population that contribute to eliminating the smoking habit.

Conclusion

In prevention work, the first thing to achieve is that the man has a perception of risk, the man himself must learn to care for and protect his health, be responsible for eliminating all the factors that adversely affect it. Lung cancer has not only caused the death of thousands of people, but it is also responsible for the deterioration of the quality of life of another large percentage of the world's population.

Prevention is the key to containing this evil. Without a doubt, in lung cancer, prevention is better than treating.

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