

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 TUESDAY 4 MAY 2021

British Lung Foundation backs new lung cancer campaign urging GPs to ‘See Through the Symptoms’

Lung cancer charities EGFR Positive UK, ALK Positive UK and the Ruth Strauss Foundation team up to raise awareness of lung cancer in never-smokers

The British Lung Foundation, Primary Care Respiratory Society, Macmillan Cancer Support and other leading respiratory organisations are supporting a new lung cancer early-diagnosis campaign launched across the UK today (Tuesday 4 May) to raise awareness of lung cancer in ‘never-smokers’ amongst GPs and primary healthcare professionals.

Lung cancer charities **EGFR Positive UK, ALK Positive UK** and the **Ruth Strauss Foundation** have developed the joint campaign that features photographs by renowned British photographer Rankin who lost his mother Anne to lung cancer in 2005. The charities are urging GPs and other primary healthcare professionals to act on lung cancer symptoms regardless of a person’s smoking history or age.

Lung cancer is England’s biggest cause of cancer deaths. Around 28,100 people die from lung cancer in England each year.¹ Lung cancer in never-smokers is now the eighth most common cause of cancer-related deaths in the UK and the seventh most prevalent cancer in the world. More never-smokers die of lung cancer each year in the UK than of ovarian cancer, leukaemia or cervical cancer.

Over 57% of lung cancer patients in the UK are diagnosed at stage 3 or 4, too late for curative treatment; and data from patient organisations suggests that in the never-smoking population this rises to nearly 90%.²

Ruth Strauss, wife of Sir Andrew Strauss, was one of these patients. Ruth was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer in early 2018, and died in December 2018, leaving behind her two young boys, then aged 10 and 13. She was 46 years old and had never smoked. In her memory Sir Andrew Strauss set up the Ruth Strauss Foundation.

ALK Positive UK, EGFR Positive UK and the Ruth Strauss Foundation jointly added: “We are delighted to come together to raise the profile of never-smoking lung cancer among primary healthcare professionals. Covid has had a devastating impact on lung cancer diagnosis, and it is crucial that awareness around lung cancer symptoms and diagnosis is enhanced. People need to be aware that lung cancer can affect anyone. All lung cancer patients deserve the opportunity for curative treatment. Early diagnosis saves lives.”

¹ [Public Health England, 2018](#)

² EGFR Positive UK; ALK Positive UK patient survey 2020

The See Through the Symptoms campaign, targeting GPs and other primary healthcare professionals, features nine patients: eight never-smokers and an occasional smoker – all diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer. For all of them, diagnosis took many months.

Razia was 35 when she was diagnosed with lung cancer, a mother of three young daughters. She was fit and healthy and had never smoked. Her diagnosis of stage four lung cancer was devastating for her and her family. As a never-smoker, it never occurred to Razia that her symptoms could mean lung cancer. It was also a shock for her GP. Faye was 28 when she was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. A student midwife working in the NHS, she was diagnosed after an emergency admission to A&E four months after first presenting with symptoms. She had never smoked.

With declining rates of smoking, the relative proportion of lung cancer in never-smokers is increasing. However, most people who have never smoked do not think they are at risk of the disease as lung cancer has been traditionally thought of as a 'smoker's disease' by both the public and healthcare professionals.

Lung cancer in never-smokers can be challenging to diagnose but the incidence of lung cancer in people who have never smoked is increasing and fact that so many are diagnosed with late-stage disease suggest that it is under recognised by GPs.

Symptoms of lung cancer include persistent cough, breathlessness, recurrent chest infections, hoarseness, back and shoulder pain and swelling in the face or neck. The campaign is consistent with NICE guidelines on diagnosis and has been developed in collaboration with leading experts in the field.

The campaign has the support of the British Thoracic Oncology Group, the British Lung Foundation, the Taskforce for Lung Health, Macmillan Cancer Support, GatewayC and the Primary Care Respiratory Society as well as leading respiratory physicians and oncologists.

Dr Anthony Cunliffe, Lead GP advisor for Macmillan Cancer Support:

"It's so important as primary care clinicians that we still consider the possibility of a diagnosis of lung cancer in patients even when they have never smoked."

Prof. Sanjay Popat, Consultant Thoracic Medical Oncologist at the Royal Marsden Hospital, said: "I'm pleased to see the launch of this campaign. I see too many patients who have never smoked present with late-stage lung cancers. It is really important that we raise awareness amongst all healthcare professionals, that people who have never smoked can get lung cancer too."

Dr Sam Hare, Consultant Chest Radiologist and a lung cancer expert for British Society of Thoracic Imaging (BSTI) said: "It remains crucial to remain vigilant to the possibility of lung

cancer in non & never-smokers, particularly adenocarcinoma which can occur due to genetic mutations. Early diagnosis with imaging such as CXR and low dose CT is pivotal to good outcomes and cure.”

The campaign has the support of the British Thoracic Oncology Group, the British Lung Foundation, the Taskforce for Lung Health, Macmillan Cancer Support, GatewayC and the Primary Care Respiratory Society as well as leading respiratory physicians and oncologists.

The See Through the Symptoms campaign will run across multi-media platforms targeting GPs and other primary healthcare professionals. The creative work was done by leading media agency, the Engine Group, and post-production by Smoke and Mirrors, with media planning and buying by Wavemaker. Everyone involved in the campaign worked pro bono.

For more details on the campaign, please visit:

www.lungcancerseethroughthesymptoms.uk

Social Media: @EgfrUk | @UKALK1 | @RuthStraussFDN

#SeeThroughSymptoms

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NOTES TO EDITOR

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Patients, leading clinicians and the following charity spokespeople are available for interview:

Debra Montague, ALK Positive UK, **Jenny Abbott**, EGFR Positive UK and **Dr Martin Forster**, Chair Research Advisory Group, Ruth Strauss Foundation - Associate Professor and Consultant in Medical Oncology at UCLH

Further campaign images, digital video content and alternative formats are available on request. Please contact Jenny or Ines.

Key Facts & Figures below.

LUNG CANCER IN NEVER-SMOKERS – KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- Lung cancer in never-smokers is now the eighth most common cause of cancer-related death in the UK and the seventh most prevalent cancer in the world.³
- It is estimated that nearly 6000 people who have never smoked die of lung cancer each year – greater than the numbers who die of cervical cancer (~5200), leukaemia (~4500), ovarian cancer (~4200).⁴
- ‘Never-smoker’ generally refers to someone who has smoked less than one hundred cigarettes in their lifetime⁵.
- Current estimates of the major contributors to lung cancers in never-smokers in the UK are: second-hand smoke (~15%); occupational carcinogen exposure (~20.5%men, ~4.3% women); outdoor pollution (~0.8%); and radon exposure (~0.5%)⁶ Other risk factors have been suggested including previous lung disease, family history and hormonal factors.

LUNG CANCER IN THE UK – KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

- Lung cancer is England’s biggest cause of cancer death. Around 28,100 people die from lung cancer in England each year.⁷
- 57% of lung cancer patients are diagnosed at stage IIIb or IV when curative treatment is no longer an option. This percentage is significantly higher than in other cancer types.⁸
- Five-year survival for persons diagnosed with stage 1 lung cancer is 57% compared with just 3% for those diagnosed with late stage (stage 4) lung cancer.⁹
- In 2018, 33.6% of all cancers in England were diagnosed via an emergency presentation. Those diagnosed through emergency presentations are often at an advanced stage, resulting in poorer survival.¹⁰
- Between 1995 and 2018, age-standardised incidence rates of lung cancer have increased from 51.4 per 100,000 to 67.0 per 100,000 for females. In males age-standardised incidence rates of lung cancer have decreased from 127.9 per 100,000 to 85.5 per 100,000.¹¹

³ Bhopal, A., Peake, M.D., Gilligan, D. and Cosford, P. Lung cancer in never-smokers: a hidden disease. Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, 2019 Vol 112(7) 269-271

⁴ [Cancer Research UK statistics](#)

⁵ Subramanian J and Govindan R. Lung cancer in never-smokers: a review. J Clin Oncol 2007; 25: 561-570

⁶ Couraud S, Zalcman G, Milleron B, Morin F and Souquet P-J. Lung cancer in never smokers – a review. Eur J Cancer 2012; 48: 1299–1311

⁷ [Public Health England](#)

⁸ Royal College of Pathologists, National Lung Cancer Audit, annual report 2018 (for the audit period 2017), May 2019

⁹ Public Health England: Cancer survival in England for patients diagnosed between 2014 and 2018, and followed up until 2019. [GOV.UK](#)

¹⁰ [National Cancer Registration and Analysis Service](#), Cancer Outcomes: Emergency Presentation by Cancer site November 2020

¹¹ Data for 2016-2018 average. [Public Health England](#)

ABOUT EGFR Positive UK

EGFR Positive UK is a registered charity (1189722) established by patients, their families, and friends. Established in 2019 as a patient support group, we became a registered charity in 2020. Our purpose is to provide support and information for patients diagnosed with EGFR mutation positive lung cancer with the aim of improving the overall survival and quality of life of EGFR positive lung cancer patients across the United Kingdom.

ABOUT ALK Positive UK

ALK Positive Lung Cancer (UK) is a registered charity (1181171) established by patients, their families and friends. We are a community from different backgrounds and walks of life - each with our own individual story and united by a diagnosis of ALK positive lung cancer. Established in 2018, our purposes are to provide support and advocacy and to improve the overall survival and quality of life of ALK positive lung cancer patients across the United Kingdom.

ABOUT Ruth Strauss Foundation

In early 2018, Ruth Strauss was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer that affects non-smokers. Ruth died on December 29, 2018. She was 46 years old and mother to two children, then aged 10 and 13. In her memory, Sir Andrew Strauss set up the Ruth Strauss Foundation to facilitate collaboration and influence research in the fight against non-smoking related lung cancers, so that together we find the causes sooner and improve outcomes. And ensure that every family with a child facing the death of a parent is offered the professional emotional support they need to prepare the family for the future.