



Med Center Health[®]
The Medical Center at Bowling Green

CANCER REPORT 2024

NEW HOPE FOR PATIENTS WITH LUNG CANCER

In the Bluegrass, more than 10,000 people die from cancer each year, with lung cancer as one of the most common cancers in the state. Nationally, Kentucky has the highest rate of new lung cancer diagnoses in the nation with 84.8 people per 100,000 diagnosed each year.

The best way to treat lung cancer is to find it early and to treat quickly. With Med Center Health's new Lung Nodule Program and Ion Bronchoscopy technology, patients now have new hope and a better chance of surviving lung cancer.

"Kentucky has the highest prevalence of lung cancer in the United States," said Jennifer Finch, Director of Clinical Integration at Med Center Health. "We want to change that. The earlier lung cancer is discovered and diagnosed, the higher the survivability. At Stage I, there is a 90% chance of overcoming the disease. If you are diagnosed at Stage IV, you are going to have just a 10% chance of surviving. This is why we want to be proactive in reaching out to patients when a nodule is reported in their imaging."



Finding Lung Nodules

There are two ways lung nodules can be found using CT or computed tomography. A patient at known risk for lung cancer may undergo a low dose CT lung cancer screening, where a radiologist is purposely looking to see if a lung nodule is present. Then there are patients who may have a CT performed for another reason, such as a scan of the abdomen or shoulder. When reading the scan, a radiologist might notice a lung nodule, referred to as an “incidental nodule.” Regardless of how a nodule is found, these patients are referred to the Lung Nodule Program.



Lung Nodule Program – A Fast Track System

In December 2023, Med Center Health created the Lung Nodule Program, which offers new hope for at-risk patients. The Lung Nodule Program’s goal is to detect cancerous lung nodules at the earliest stages and then provide treatment quickly before the cancer advances to a higher stage.

Med Center Health’s Lung Nodule Program consists of a multidisciplinary team, including pulmonologists, radiation oncologists, medical oncologists, and cardiothoracic surgeons. Together, this team of providers has more than

200 years of clinical experience in a wide variety of disciplines. Every Friday, this team meets to view and discuss patients who may need further examination.

“As a team, we review and discuss all lung nodule patient cases weekly,” said Dr. Rodney Steff, Pulmonologist at Med Center Health Western Kentucky Heart & Lung. “This approach allows us to determine the best plan of treatment for these patients. In some cases, this means we order additional diagnostic testing such a CT scan, PET scan or blood tests. For other patients, we may determine they need immediate surgery. Our fast track approach to lung nodules means we have a treatment plan before patients even enter the exam room and can truly expedite diagnosis and treatment of these cancers.”



A multidisciplinary team with Med Center Health’s Lung Nodule Program meets weekly to discuss patient cases.



Biopsy of Small Nodules

New state-of-the-art technology at The Medical Center, the Ion Robotic Navigational Bronchoscopy, takes a minimally-invasive peripheral lung biopsy using robotic-assisted technology. This procedure helps pulmonologists at The Medical Center be more accurate when taking biopsies of lung nodules and allows them to biopsy nodules smaller than ever before.



More than 70% of all lung cancer nodules are located in the outer one-third of the lung, an area full of tight spaces and narrow airways that may be hard to reach. This major medical advancement enables pulmonologists to obtain tissue samples from deep within the lung, thus detecting earlier stages of lung cancer.

Shifting the Numbers

Identifying cancerous lung nodules in the earliest stages is called “Stage Shifting.” This is exactly what the Lung Nodule Program has done for lung cancer treatment at Med Center Health.

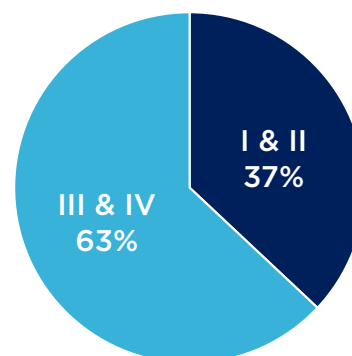
Prior to the creation of the Lung Nodule Program, 63% of Med Center Health’s lung cancer diagnoses were found at Stage III or Stage IV, while just 37% were found at Stage

I or II. Since the inception of the Lung Nodule Program in December 2023, Med Center Health has been able to shift those numbers. Now, just 46% of lung cancer patients are diagnosed at Stage III or IV, while 54% are diagnosed at Stage I or II.

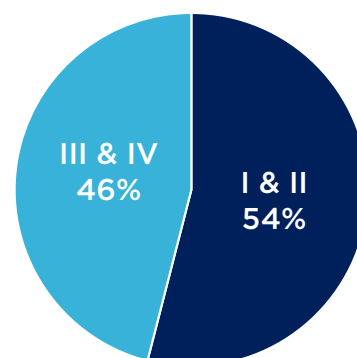
This is truly a life-altering change for many lung cancer patients in the Southcentral Kentucky area. More patients now have a better chance of survival after a lung cancer diagnosis.

“This clinic has already helped save numerous lives,” said Finch. In just under a year, the Lung Nodule Program has seen over 500 patients. “We have caught early-stage cancers in patients who had no idea they even had a nodule, and we have helped treat patients in late-stage cancers by helping them get the resources they need.”

Staging 2020-2023



Staging Dec 2023 - Sept 2024



One Patient's Journey

Butler County native, Carla Goodley, had received a chest x-ray where the radiologist reported an incidental and potentially cancerous lung nodule. Carla and her mother attended church and spoke about her recent diagnosis, and a clinician from Med Center Health heard Carla's story and asked if it would be okay if she referred Carla to Med Center Health's Lung Nodule Program.

The next day, Carla was referred to the Lung Nodule Program, and within 24 hours she was contacted by a Med Center Health employee and scheduled for an appointment for the end of the week. On Friday, Carla met with Med Center Health pulmonologist, Dr. Rodney Steff, and Dr. Steff was able to biopsy her nodule the following Wednesday. Carla's lung nodule was, in fact, cancerous.

"Dr. Steff was amazing," said Goodley. "He let me know that we were going to get this figured out, and he told me that we were



Carla Goodley

going to be able to take care of this. It was just so amazing how quick everything went. I was just so at ease with their doctors."

Fortunately, Carla's lung cancer was found at a very early stage, meaning she had an increased chance of surviving. Later in the month, Carla was scheduled for an operation with cardiothoracic surgeon, Dr. Paul Moore. Dr. Moore was able to completely remove the lung nodule during the procedure.

"Dr. Moore explained everything to me about what they were going to do and how the surgery would work, and it's just been amazing how good I feel," said Goodley. "I'm still a little numb, and they said that could take a year, and I still have a scar, but you know what? I can live with a scar."

Carla had a follow-up CT scan in September, and she has no detectable cancer.

We Can Help

If you or a loved one have been diagnosed with a lung nodule, or believe that you are at risk for lung cancer, **call the Med Center Health Lung Nodule Program at (270) 535-6886.**



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