

Lung Cancer Screening Insights from the NLST: Benefits, Harms and Unresolved Issues

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The National Lung Screening Trial (NLST), compared a newer form of screening called low dose helical computerized tomography (LDHCT), to traditional chest X-rays. Participants in this trial had to meet the following eligibility:

- 55-74 years of age
- Current smoker without lung cancer symptoms with a 30 pack year history or a former smoker that quit within the last 15 years with a 30 pack year history

Pack-years are used to measure how much people have smoked; it is the number of packs of cigarettes smoked daily, multiplied by the number of years smoked. Dr. Berg's presentation at the OCRC's Occupational Lung Cancer Symposium detailed the results from each round of screening, as well as the potential radiation risk of LDHCT versus its benefits. It was found that there were 20% fewer deaths amongst patients screened using LDHCT in comparison to those screened using X-rays. Dr. Berg also summarized the guidelines released by major healthcare organizations in response to the NLST results.