



Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices
1600 Clifton Road, N.E., Mailstop H24-8
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027

January 25, 2021

Dear ACIP:

The Lung Cancer Action Network (LungCAN), an association of dozens of patient advocacy nonprofit organizations, urges the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) to identify and include cancer patients/survivors as a high-risk group for developing complications and severe forms of COVID-19. Furthermore, cancer patients should be placed in Tier 1B with expedited access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Because COVID-19 is primarily a respiratory condition, this disease presents a unique challenge to lung cancer patients, who are at extremely high risk of hospitalization and death from COVID-19, according to the CDC.¹ People with the third most commonly diagnosed cancer, i.e., lung cancer, have approximately a 65% chance of hospitalization if they contract COVID-19 and a 32% risk of dying from COVID-19.^{2 3 4} That is more than TWICE the mortality risk as the 80-plus age group.

Lung cancer patients often have co-morbidities, in addition to lung cancer, which may explain why it is so deadly for this population. Furthermore, most lung cancer patients have advanced disease, which inevitably means active treatment with health care providers. Lung cancer patients cannot stay in their homes to avoid exposure to the virus but must seek appropriate treatment for their cancer. Many lung cancer patients are required to visit hospitals for diagnostic tests and treatments. Medical visits, while necessary for survival, subject patients to added risk of exposure to COVID-19. Due to this high risk, the lung cancer community has been waiting expectantly for access to the vaccine. Now that it is here, we are dismayed to learn there is no cancer patient advocate organization on the ACIP. Consequentially, high risk conditions such as lung cancer are not represented when deciding vaccination priorities.

¹ CDC, "People with Certain Medical Conditions," December 29, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>. Accessed Jan. 22, 2021

² A. Piper-Lillilo et al, "Coronavirus Disease 2019 Infection in a Patient Population with Lung Cancer: Incidence, Presentation, and Alternative Diagnostic Considerations, JTO Clinical and Research Reports, Vol. 2, Issue 1 [January 2021], <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666364320301752> (accessed Jan. 22, 2021)

³ J. Luo et al, "Covid-19 in Patients with Lung Cancer," Annals of Oncology, Vol. 31, Issue 10 [October 2020], <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S092375342039894X>

⁴ Ong MBH, "Cancer groups urge CDC to prioritize cancer patients for COVID-19 vaccination," https://cancerletter.com/articles/20210108_2/ Accessed Jan. 22, 2021



To minimize hospitalizations and deaths, the science is clear. People with identifiable conditions, including lung cancer, should be prioritized for the COVID-19 vaccine.

LungCAN member patient advocacy groups stand united with the COVID-Lung Cancer Consortium, comprising a global assembly of thought leaders in thoracic oncology, virology, immunology, vaccines and patient advocacy, and urgently request that patients with cancer, especially lung cancer, be considered a high-priority population. The American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), National Comprehensive Cancer Network® (NCCN) and other professional medical, scientific and patient advocacy organizations also recommend vaccination of cancer patients.⁵

Cancer patients, in general, are not included in 1b vaccine prioritization, nor are they on ACIP's recommendation for tier 1b. On behalf of the 541,000 Americans living with lung cancer in the United States, we implore the ACIP to include cancer patients in Tier 1b so they can have immediate access to lifesaving COVID-19 vaccines.

Please do not hesitate to contact LungCAN if you have any questions or would like to further discuss this urgent request.

On behalf of the Lung Cancer Action Network Membership,

Dusty Donaldson & Cindy Langhorne
LungCAN Co-Leaders

ABOUT LungCAN

LungCAN is a collaborative association comprising approximately 25 U.S.-based 501(C)(3) nonprofit organizations plus several patient groups with a primary focus on advocating for lung cancer patients. LungCAN members collaborate on strategic projects to efficiently and effectively serve those at risk for or living with lung cancer. LungCAN cultivates a cooperative environment, encourages the exchange of ideas, fosters effectiveness and efficiency and gives member organizations a united voice behind a shared cause. For more information, visit LungCAN.org.

⁵ NCCN, "Preliminary Recommendations of the NCCN COVID-19 Vaccination Advisory Committee," https://www.nccn.org/covid-19/pdf/COVID-19_Vaccination_Guidance_V1.0.pdf, Accessed Jan. 22, 2021