



## CT Screenings Could Be Game Changer For Lung Cancer At Least One National Insurer Now Covering CT Scans

(NAPSA)—Advocates of lung cancer screening are hoping that CT scans will do for smokers what colonoscopies have done for those at risk of colon cancer—find the cancer early enough for therapy to work.

Early-stage diagnosis is linked to longer survival rates for breast cancer, prostate cancer and colon cancer—all cancers that have standard screening tests. Until now, however, there has been no proven screening test for lung cancer, which is the leading cause of cancer death in the U.S.

“Usually, by the time a more definitive symptom of lung cancer becomes obvious, the disease has already progressed to late-stage cancer,” said Laurie Fenton-Ambrose, president and chief executive officer for the Lung Cancer Alliance, a national non-profit organization dedicated solely to patient support and advocacy for people living with lung cancer and those at risk for the disease.

A recent study supported by a grant from the National Cancer Institute was published in August in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. This randomized, controlled trial of more than 50,000 Americans found that spiral CT (computed tomography) screening performed each year for three years reduced the likelihood of deaths from lung cancer by 20 percent compared with those



**CT scans may help find lung cancer early enough for therapy to work.**

screened by standard X-rays.

The American Society of Clinical Oncology's annual report on progress against cancer listed the study as one of 2011's top advances.

The study led at least one national insurer—WellPoint—to offer coverage of CT scans for current and former smokers at high risk for lung cancer who have medical histories similar to those in the study. The group studied was free of lung cancer symptoms, between 55 and 74 years of age and had smoked the equivalent of a pack a day for 30 years. The participants were either current smokers or had quit within the past 15 years.

“This was the first time a well-designed study on a large population of smokers showed that you could save lives through screening CT scans,” said John Whitney, a

WellPoint medical director. “Studies like this one provide the medical evidence we need to make good coverage decisions. We're looking forward to medical research continuing to evolve on this issue.”

Fenton-Ambrose said the Lung Cancer Alliance is hoping more insurers will make the same decision as WellPoint.

“Now that we have the science, our work shifts to bringing the benefit of screening safely, effectively and equitably into the health care system,” said Fenton-Ambrose.

For those who want to know if they are at risk of lung cancer, the Lung Cancer Alliance has set up an informational website at [www.screenforlungcancer.org](http://www.screenforlungcancer.org) to help people understand more about the symptoms, screenings, disease and treatment.