



VA Lung Cancer Screening: What Veterans Need to Know About Early Detection

Brief Episode Summary

Navy Veteran and lung cancer survivor Jim Pantelas reflects on being diagnosed with stage 3B lung cancer 20 years ago—before screening was available—and why a simple three-minute low-dose CT scan can now save lives. Joined by Dr. Drew Moghanaki, a thoracic oncology leader and VA physician, they discuss why lung cancer often has no early symptoms, why Veterans face increased risk from toxic exposures and smoking culture, and how annual screening through the VA or civilian healthcare can catch lung cancer early, when it is most treatable and often curable.

Timestamps

- 00:00 The 3 minute scan message
- 00:19 Why lung cancer impacts everyone
- 00:59 Meet Jim Pantelas and Dr. Drew Moghanaki
- 01:40 VA screening is catching more cancers early
- 02:44 Lung cancer can be a silent killer
- 03:25 Jim's stage 3B diagnosis and early symptoms
- 05:16 Surgery, chemo, and radiation for stage 3 disease
- 06:49 Living 20 years after treatment
- 07:27 The joy of family after survival
- 08:13 Why Jim believes he got lung cancer
- 09:18 Toxic exposures beyond cigarettes
- 12:26 Military smoking culture and addiction
- 15:15 What the screening scan is actually like
- 16:36 Why people still do not get screened
- 17:22 Why annual screening matters
- 18:34 Fear of diagnosis and how to answer it
- 20:03 Screening is covered
- 21:12 VA access and civilian screening options
- 22:49 Why people think lung cancer is not curable
- 23:59 Life after lung surgery and lung capacity
- 24:52 Final call to action

Links and Resources

Guest Information:

- **Dr. Drew Moghanaki, MD**
 - Radiation Oncologist and Researcher, Veterans Health Administration; Associate Professor, University of Michigan
- **Jim Pantelas**
 - Navy Veteran, 20-plus Year Lung Cancer Survivor, Voice of Hope Speaker

LCFA Resources:

- [Lung Cancer Screening Information](#)
- [Early Detection and Diagnosis](#)
- [Understanding Biomarker Testing](#)
- [Treatment Options Explained](#)
- [Clinical Trials Information](#)

For Veterans - Benefits and Eligibility:

- [PACT Act Information and Eligibility](#)
- [VA Health Care Eligibility](#)
- [Airborne Hazards and Burn Pit Registry](#)
- [Agent Orange Exposure Information](#)
- [Asbestos Exposure and Veterans](#)
- [VA Benefits Hotline](#): 1-800-827-1000

Research and Clinical Trials:

- [LCFA-Funded Research](#)
- [Clinical Trial Matching Services](#)
- [National Cancer Institute Clinical Trials Search](#)
- [VA Cooperative Studies Program](#)
- [Information on Liquid Biopsy Research](#)

VA Patient Navigation and Support:

- [VA Patient Advocates](#)
- [Veteran Service Organizations Directory](#)
- [Cancer Support Community](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Radon Testing and Information](#)
- [American Lung Association - Lung Cancer Basics](#)

Full Transcript

Full transcript available -

<https://lcfamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/HWA-VA-Lung-Cancer-Screening-Transcript.pdf>

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Medical Disclaimer

The content shared in this episode reflects personal experiences and general information about lung cancer screening, diagnosis, treatment, and research. This information should not substitute for professional medical guidance. Please consult your healthcare provider or VA medical team for personalized medical advice, screening recommendations, and treatment decisions tailored to your individual health situation and military service history.

Important Note for Veterans: If you served in the military and have concerns about toxic exposures (including burn pits, Agent Orange, asbestos, or other hazards), contact the VA to discuss your eligibility for health benefits under the PACT Act and other programs.

Hope With Answers Living With Lung Cancer is produced by Lung Cancer Foundation of America (LCFA). LCFA's mission is to improve lung cancer survivorship by funding transformative science. Learn more at lcfamerica.org.

Key Takeaways from This Episode:

- A low dose CT scan takes less than three minutes, is painless, and often takes less time than an oil change.
- The VA now actively screens eligible Veterans—if you're over 50 and have a smoking history, ask about screening
- Veterans may face higher lung cancer risk not only from smoking but also from toxic exposures such as asbestos, radon, burn pits, and other airborne hazards.

- The PACT Act has expanded VA healthcare eligibility—check if you qualify
- Early detection means more treatment options and better outcomes.

LCFA's mission is the improvement in survivorship of lung cancer patients through the funding of transformative science.

While raising funds to support lung cancer research, LCFA will raise the public's awareness and serve as a resource for patients or anyone seeking answers, hope, and access to updated treatment information, scientific investigation, and clinical trials.

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