Lung cancer: the most fatal cancer

- The most common lethal neoplasm in the world is lung cancer, which kills 1.6 million people each year—and the numbers are growing.
- Of the major cancers, lung cancer remains the most common in the world, with an estimated 1.8 million new cases in 2012. Most (58 percent) of these occurred in less-developed regions.
- Lung cancer is also the most fatal cancer globally.
- In 2012, 1.6 million people died from lung cancer accounting for 19.4 percent of the total deaths attributable to cancer. The ratio of mortality to incidence is 0.87.
- If lung cancer has spread to other organs, the 5-year survival is only about 13 percent.
- Risk factors include passive exposure to tobacco smoke, biomass fuel, diesel exhaust, radon, asbestos and other environmental and workplace carcinogens.

Treating lung cancer

- In lower income countries, access to care and cost-effective treatments can reduce the human burden and societal impact of lung cancer.
- Screening with CT scans compared with chest radiography resulted in a 20 percent reduction in lung cancer-specific deaths, but much cheaper and more accessible methods are needed for low-income settings.
- Early-stage lung cancer is treated with curative-intent surgery or radiation therapy.
- Selective patients may benefit from chemotherapy after surgical resection, while patients with local advanced disease may benefit from concurrent chemo-radiotherapy with or without surgery.
- Although advanced stage lung cancer is not curable, many patients may have symptom improvement and survival prolongation by effective treatment.
- Molecular-targeted therapy against epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) mutations and anaplastic lymphoma kinase (ALK) re-arrangements attain tumor response rates of around 70%.
- Environmental causes of lung cancer, such as radon and asbestos, can be monitored and reduced. Countries must not be allowed to export asbestos to poorer countries.
- Other known modifiable risk factors, such as biomass fuels, diesel exhausts and air pollution must also be addressed.
- Better screening, early diagnosis and identifying molecular targets for effective and cost-effective modern treatment should improve lung cancer outcomes.
- Globally, efforts to reduce inequity of care and access to effective and affordable treatments are also vital for addressing the lung cancer crises around the world.
About FIRS
The Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) is an organization comprising the world's leading international respiratory societies and working together to improve lung health globally. The members of FIRS are the American Thoracic Society (ATS), American College of Chest Physicians (CHEST), Asociación Latinoamericana De Tórax (ALAT), Asian Pacific Society of Respirology (APSR), European Respiratory Society (ERS), International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Diseases (The Union) and Pan African Thoracic Society (PATS). Through education and advocacy, FIRS unites and enhances the efforts of 70,000 physicians, nurses, and other health care providers; biomedical researchers; and public health experts to improve lung health around the world.