

Annual lung cancer screening benefits outweigh risks for some

December 31 2013, by Terri Mellow

(Medical Xpress)—You may have heard in recent days about new guidelines on lung cancer screening put forth by the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force.

The University of Michigan was one of five institutions to compare hundreds of alternative screening strategies, using mathematical models that helped inform these recommendations.

Here's a little bit about their findings:

Low-dose CT scans performed annually could save the lives of 18,000 people at high risk for lung cancer. Researchers said an annual lung cancer screen for 10.5 million individuals ages 55-80, who have at least 30 "pack years" of smoking history, could reduce overall [lung cancer](#) mortality within the group by 25 percent, and reduce overall deaths from the disease by 14 percent.

A pack year means that someone has smoked an average of a pack per day for a year. In the simplest example, a person smoked a pack a day for 30 years or smoked two packs a day for 15 years.

Rafael Meza, assistant professor of epidemiology at the U-M School of Public Health, led one of the groups that developed models to analyze various screening scenarios to determine the risks and benefits for people of various ages and smoking histories.

Although not without concerns—including false positives that could lead to additional, sometimes invasive procedures—the various models showed the benefits for those at high risk outweighed the harms.

Their research is reported in the current issue of *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

More information: Harry J. de Koning, Rafael Meza, Sylvia K. Plevritis, Kevin ten Haaf, Vidit N. Munshi, et al. "Benefits and Harms of Computed Tomography Lung Cancer Screening Strategies: A Comparative Modeling Study for the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force." *Annals of Internal Medicine*. 2013 Dec; [DOI: 10.7326/M13-2316](https://doi.org/10.7326/M13-2316)

Provided by University of Michigan

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