BTMED news

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Volume 10, Issue 1 Spring 2015 www.btmed.org

CT Scans Save Lives

Norman Grnya of LIUNA Local 348 recalls an area at Hanford that was chained off due to high levels of radiation, with only a "Keep Out" sign between the contaminated zone and the workers. "But you have tumbleweeds blowing through it, dust blowing through it, animals going through it," he continued. "There's nothing to keep the radiation inside that chain."

For construction workers working near hazardous materials, the same can be said about their lungs. That is why BTMed offers free low-dose CT Scans to eligible workers. Lung cancer kills over 160,000 Americans a year, and is responsible for more deaths than any other cancer. Construction workers who have been exposed to asbestos, radiation, silica and other hazards are especially at risk. With early detection, the chances of living a longer life are much greater.

The CT Scan (also known as Low-Dose Computerized Tomography), is a fast, painless, and non-intrusive procedure. CT Scans are offered to BTMed participants with the highest risk for lung cancer.

CT Scans are available in Augusta (GA), Cincinnati (OH), Oak Ridge (TN), Richland (WA), and Seattle (WA).

FINDINGS

- **721 workers scanned between March 2011 and March 2015.**
- **150 scans found nodules that required follow-up**
- **12 lung cancers found**
  - **-Six stage 1, curable with surgery**
  - **-Six stage 3 and 4**
- **317 referred to personal physician for other findings — renal mass, thyroid nodule, coronary calcifications**

Lung cancer can take hold even when it is not showing symptoms, and the sooner it is detected, the better. "If I hadn't gone through the screening, I never would have known I had cancer. Then who knows how I'd feel today. Or if I'd even be here," says Gryna.

For more information, including a video describing the procedure, visit www.btmed.org or call a BTMed nurse at 1-888-464-0009.

CT Scan Eligibility Requirements

CT Scans are offered to BTMed participants with the highest risk for lung cancer:

- Age 50 to 77 years old
- Not recently treated for cancer
- Current/former smoker, having smoked at least one pack of cigarettes a day for at least 20 years (or the equivalent i.e., two packs a day for 10 years)
- Chest X-Ray shows asbestosis, even if non-smoker
- Worked at a DOE site for five years
- Be in fairly good health to withstand lung cancer treatmeant

Former Hanford Worker Overcomes Silent Killer

UA Local 598 Member survives lung cancer, looks to his wife and the future

Roger Tool sat beside his wife, Ellen, still able to hold her hand as if they were as inseparable as the day they met. They were just a month shy of their 49th wedding anniversary and already looking to "sail way past" their 50th so they could "enjoy all the milestones with their kids and their grandkids." But these years of enjoyment, of well-earned retirement, almost never happened. And if it weren't for discovering a lung cancer that was silently preparing to invade his lungs and spread through his body, Roger Tool may have left his wife to experience these joys without him.

Roger Tool and his wife, Ellen, are enjoying the peace of mind in knowing that Roger's cancer was detected early.

A pipefitter out of UA Local 598, Tool spent a quarter of a century working in the active areas on one of the most dangerous sites in the country: the U.S. DOE's Hanford Reservation. It was one of the original World War II sites, begun in 1943 to produce plutonium.

When Tool worked out there in the 1970s, he and his co-workers "knew hardly nothing" about the materials they were exposed to. "I was up to my elbows in chemicals year round," Tool explained. "There was even a pint jar of mercury that you'd take out and play with cause you didn't know anything different about it." It was these types of exposures, exposures that didn't carry the sense of danger that they do now, that tried to take Tool's later years away from him.

"There was even a pint jar of mercury you'd take out and play with cause you didn't know anything different about it."

When he heard through his union hall about BTMed offering a free medical exam to any former construction worker who worked on a DOE site, Tool took advantage of the "thorough" exam. He received a chest x-ray, a beryllium test, a hearing test. And at the time, everything checked out alright. Years later as part of the Early Lung Cancer Detection program, BTMed began offering free CT Scans to participants determined to have the highest-risk of lung cancer. Tool met the eligibility criteria and accepted the invitation even though he felt healthy.

This time, however, everything didn't check out.

The scan detected suspicious nodules in his lungs. Tool returned for a three-month follow-up scan that found a change in the nodules. "I felt good," Tool explained. "I had no symptoms of anything." Little did he know, those nodules were lung cancer.

Tool went in for surgery to remove a cancer known for its tendency to show no symptoms until it's too late. "Had Roger not done the screening," Ellen said, "this would have grown. This would have impacted his life. This would have taken his life."

Tears formed in Ellen's eyes as she imagined the future that was almost stripped from them. "This is going to give us a lot more years to enjoy our retirement and the fun things we want to do." Ellen looked to her husband. "To enjoy each other. To travel. Just to," she smiled, "enjoy life."

Roger nodded. Because he understood that his health isn't just about him. It's about the people he loves. His friends. His children. His grandchildren. And his wife of almost 50 years.

This is what he's thankful for. This is what he gets to enjoy.

Story by Miles Fisher

See more of Roger's story in the "CT Scan Saves Lives" video featured on www.btmed.org

Medical Screening Begins for Former Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Workers

"I want to commend the the [Former Worker] Program[s]. You are providing a vital service, in insuring ongoing medical exams for those who may be at risk for occupational diseases. I urge all of those workers that qualify to learn about the program[s]."
- Senator Tom Udall, New Mexico

In February 2015, BTMed visited Carlsbad, NM to announce the availability of medical screenings to former DOE workers from the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP).

Former WIPP construction workers can now receive screenings at one of BTMed's 200 clinics located across the county. Locally, screenings are offered at the University of New Mexico Family Practice Center (Albuquerque) or at the Center for Industrial Medicine (Hobbs, NM).

Medical evaluations are based on potential work exposures to known hazards at WIPP, which may include ionizing radiation, hazardous solvents, diesel fumes, salt dust, lead and noise, all of which can elevate the risk for occupational illnesses. Former WIPP workers may be tested for conditions including chronic lung disease, hearing loss, kidney and liver damage. There is also a general wellness component of the exam to test for non-occupationally related illnesses.

To help announce the program, BTMed representatives participated in a Joint Outreach Task Group meeting in February to spread the word about medical screening. The meeting also featured presentations by the Department of Labor and DOE.

Representatives for New Mexico Senators Tom Udall (D) and Martin Heinrich (D) were on hand to voice their support for the health and safety of WIPP workers and for the medical screening programs. Both Senators issued letters of support that were read by Congressional aides during the meeting.

BTMed partners with the New Mexico Building and Construction Trades Council and their focus is on screening former construction workers. For more information call BTMed toll-free at 1-800-866-9663 (www.btmed.org).

The entrance to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant near Carlsbad, N.M. Photo credit: U.S. DOE

"I would like to thank the employees of WIPP — both past and present — for your service to our country. I am glad that these medical screenings are now available to former WIPP employees. Screenings make it possible to detect and treat medical issues in early stages."- Senator Martin Heinrich, New Mexico

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Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
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Washington, DC
Permit No. 5968

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This publication was produced by CPWR through funding from the Department of Energy (DE-FC01-06EH06004). The information provided here is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of DOE.

Has It Been Three Years Since Your BTMed Exam?

Call 1-800-866-9663 to schedule your re-screen exam.

BTMed offers free re-screenings every three years so you can monitor your health. Many occupational diseases don't show up for many years after exposure.

"I received an exam because I thought I'd been exposed to hazards on the work site at Portsmouth. But it sometimes takes a while for health problems to show up so I'm going to follow the BTMed program until the time I can get checked again."

-Travis Prater, Pipe Fitters Local 577, Portsmouth
BTMed Participant

Don't Forget to Stay in Touch!

Even if it hasn't been three years since your last exam, if you've changed your address or are now using a cell phone, please take a minute to let us know. Call 1-800-866-9663 or email btmed@zenith-american.com. It's important that we stay connected! As a reminder, all your information is kept confidential.

Easing compensation rules for Ill Hanford Workers

In March, the Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health recommended easing the requirements for Hanford workers to quality for compensation under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program. EEOICPA requires that radiation exposure be estimated for Hanford workers who have cancer to determine if their cancer likely was cause by radiation. However, if too little information is available to estimate exposure for groups of workers, they may be designated "special exposure cohorts" with eased rules. The Board agreed that Hanford workers belong in an SEC.

If you worked at Hanford for 250 days between October 1, 1943 and December 31, 1990 and have a type of cancer associated with radiation, you may be entitled to $150,000 without having to prove exposure levels. This new extension (1984-1990) covers workers employed by subcontractors; some of the prime contractors are not included.

"It took 7 years for this extention to pass. That is too long – our members are dying. The extension through 1990 will certainly help many deserving workers but there's no reason why this has taken so long," said B.C. Smith, president, Central Washington Building and Construction Trades Council.

If you worked at Hanford, remember to take advantage of the free medical screenings and re-screenings offered by BTMed to catch a diagnosis early. For more information on this SEC contact the DOL Resource Center at 509-946-3333.