

A brief explanation of the technique and benefits of Endobronchial Ultrasound by Dr. Ian Mortimore BSc, PhD

A new weapon in the fight against lung cancer

Once lung cancer is suspected, patients have chest x-rays and CT scans, which can confirm the presences of abnormal tissue. However, to make a firm diagnosis of lung cancer, a biopsy of abnormal tissue is required. Conventionally, this can be performed by bronchoscopy, in which a tube is passed through the nose and into the central airways of the lungs. If abnormal tissue is visible it can be biopsied. Peripheral lesions in the lungs can often be biopsied using a needle passed through the skin and chest wall. However, if abnormal tissue is central within the chest and not visible at bronchoscopy, at present, an operation performed at a regional cardiothoracic centre is required to obtain tissue.

Endobronchial ultrasound guided needle biopsy is a new technique, which can obtain tissue at bronchoscopy when tumour is not visible within the airways. The ultrasound probe detects abnormal tissue and a needle can be passed painlessly from the bronchoscope through the airway in order to obtain a biopsy specimen. This technique, which can be performed locally, is a significant advance both for diagnosis and staging of lung cancer.

The respiratory consultants in Gloucestershire have recently asked the Trustees of the Gloucester Chest Fund to consider raising money for this equipment, which will cost around £80,000



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