



Testing and Early Diagnosis

COVID-19 and Lung Cancer Screening

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I'm Devika Das and I'm a Medical Oncologist at the University of Alabama at Birmingham; and I'm excited to talk about a topic that's very dear to me — lung cancer screening. Overall, cancer screening is something that has been available for our patients for many years now; and we have information from breast cancer and cervical cancer that screening patients and diagnosing them with some of these cancers early or pre-cancerous lesions can save lives and potentially lead to cures for patients who will be diagnosed with these diseases.

We are in the middle of a global pandemic, hopefully to what's the tail-end of that. But, as with everything else in healthcare, we have seen some repercussions of the healthcare disruption that has happened with COVID. And so what has happened to cancer screening? What are we seeing, as physicians, with patients who are eligible for cancer screening in the past two years?

So, there was some data that was presented in one of the medical journals, which showed that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the breast cancer and cervical cancer screening rates have gone down. Similarly, there have been some changes with colorectal cancer screening and all the tests associated with that. What that means, for patients, is that when there is no screening happening in the healthcare system, a lot of patients do then get diagnosed with advanced-staged malignancies, and thus miss their opportunity for cure — which has been a big push that now we are emerging out of the pandemic, we want to make sure that all patients and advocates and family members are going back to care with their primary-care physicians and we're starting those discussions to make sure that if they are eligible for screening, that they go ahead and get those tests scheduled as soon as possible.