

February 5, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Submitted electronically: Secretary@HHS.gov

Dear Secretary Azar:

The American College of Radiology (ACR)¹ strongly endorses the anti-smoking campaigns the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has funded throughout the years. Now, we encourage HHS to leverage these campaigns to promote annual lung cancer screening for individuals at high risk of developing the disease.

More than 220,000 people in the United States will be diagnosed with lung cancer this year and nearly 142,000 will die of the disease. A significant number of lung cancer deaths could be averted if current screening recommendations were adopted, allowing for early detection of lung cancer at its most treatable stages. The life-saving benefits of low dose CT (LDCT) screening in at-risk populations are well documented; in fact, 20-30% more lives could be saved if high-risk patients were referred for regular screening. Accordingly, LDCT screening of high-risk individuals is recommended by the American Cancer Society, the American Lung Association, the American College of Surgeon's Commission on Cancer, the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, and many other medical and scientific organizations.

Although Medicare and nearly all private payers cover lung cancer screening, public awareness of this life-saving screening benefit is woefully low. Recent research indicates that fewer than 4% of eligible patients take advantage of lung cancer screening exams, largely due to a lack of awareness of the benefits.² We believe a public health awareness campaign targeted to patients and providers would make a profound difference in lung cancer screening uptake. Moreover, given the demonstrated success of existing HHS anti-smoking campaigns such as Smokefree.gov and BeTobaccoFree.HHS.gov, we believe the Department has a unique responsibility and opportunity to increase public awareness of LDCT and encourage its adoption.

¹ The ACR represents more than 38,000 diagnostic radiologists, radiation oncologists, interventional radiologists, nuclear medicine physicians and medical physicists.

² Jemal A, Fedewa SA. Lung cancer screening with low-dose computed tomography in the United States-2010 to 2015. *JAMA Oncol*. 2017;39:1278–1281

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We would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with your team in such an effort. Please contact Cynthia Moran, ACR Executive Vice President of Government Relations, Economics and Health Policy, at (202) 223-1670 or cmoran@acr.org with questions or to let us know how we might be of assistance. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William T. Thorwarth, Jr." followed by "MD, FACP".

William T. Thorwarth, Jr., MD, FACP
Chief Executive Officer