

Lung cancer rates higher in women than men: Study

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New Delhi: Researchers have discovered a disturbing trend of higher lung cancer rates in women in India as compared to men in recent years due to pollution and other reasons. The findings also concluded that while the proportion of females with lung cancer increased, the smoking rates remained similar.

The study was conducted over a 10-year period — from January 2008 to March 2018 — at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Delhi.

Head of department, pulmonary medicine, AIIMS, Dr Anant Mohan, said historically, lung cancer has been prevalent more in men than in women, but the trend seems to be changing in the past few years in several parts of the world.

“The reasons are likely to be multifactorial, with changing smoking habits and environmental toxic substances/biomass exposure, especially in women residing in rural regions, along with better accessibility to healthcare facilities allowing more in the female population to seek medical care,” he said.

The study revealed that adenocarcinoma (cancer that forms in the glandular tissue), or ADC, increased from 9.5% to 35.9% and squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) from 25.4% to 30.6%.

Non-smokers were younger, mostly female and educated, had a higher prevalence of ADC and epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) mutations and anaplastic large-cell lymphoma kinase (ALK) mutations and had better survival rates, said the study.

A recently-concluded unpublished study of the pulmonary department, records of patients diagnosed with lung cancer over a 12-year period — between January 2008 and March 2020 — revealed that the increasing trend of lung cancer in females could partially be due to non-tobacco exposures, such as indoor air pollution or poor environmental or urban air quality.

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