



Veterans on the Front Lines: How Screening Saved One Life and Powers Tomorrow's Cures Show Notes

Brief Episode Summary

Air Force and Navy Veteran Donnita Butler shares how advocating for a low-dose CT scan led to her stage 1A lung cancer diagnosis—catching it early enough to save her life. Joined by Dr. Drew Moghanaki, a leading VA radiation oncologist and researcher, they explore why Veterans face elevated lung cancer risks, how the VA is revolutionizing screening access, and how thousands of Veterans are now rolling up their sleeves to donate blood for groundbreaking research into liquid biopsy tests that could detect cancer with a simple blood draw.

Timestamps

- 00:00 Welcome and introduction
- 01:48 Donnita Butler's military service background
- 02:50 How Donnita discovered she qualified for lung cancer screening
- 05:54 Toxic exposures: asbestos, radon, and military service
- 08:05 Why lung screening saves lives and lung cancer is curable when caught early
- 09:33 How the VA made lung cancer screening a national priority
- 10:32 Donnita's experience: having to fight for screening and the five-year gap
- 12:32 How simple and painless a low-dose CT scan really is
- 14:37 Advice for Veterans who are nervous or hesitant about screening
- 16:47 The life-changing difference early detection makes
- 18:31 Veterans donating blood for liquid biopsy research
- 21:13 The critical role of clinical trials in advancing lung cancer treatment
- 23:29 Donnita's journey to biomarker testing and clinical trial eligibility
- 25:34 What biomarkers are and why they matter
- 26:58 Tips for Veterans to advocate for themselves and access VA benefits
- 29:47 What gives hope for the future of lung cancer care

Links and Resources

Guest Information:

- **Dr. Drew Moghanaki, MD**
 - Radiation Oncologist and Researcher, Veterans Health Administration; Associate Professor, University of Michigan
- **Donnita Butler**
 - Air Force and Navy Veteran, Stage 1A Lung Cancer Survivor

LCFA Resources:

- [Lung Cancer Screening Information](#)
- [Early Detection and Diagnosis](#)
- [Understanding Biomarker Testing](#)
- [Treatment Options Guide](#)
- [Clinical Trials Information](#)

Screening and Prevention:

- [U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Lung Cancer Screening Guidelines](#)
- [American Lung Association: Saved By The Scan](#)
- [VA Lung Cancer Screening Program](#)
- [Find a VA Lung Cancer Screening Location](#)

For Veterans - Benefits and Eligibility:

- [PACT Act Information and Eligibility](#)
- [VA Health Care Eligibility](#)
- [Airborne Hazards and Burn Pit Registry](#)
- [Agent Orange Exposure Information](#)
- [Asbestos Exposure and Veterans](#)
- [VA Benefits Hotline](#): 1-800-827-1000

Research and Clinical Trials:

- [LCFA-Funded Research](#)
- [Clinical Trial Matching Services](#)
- [National Cancer Institute Clinical Trials Search](#)
- [VA Cooperative Studies Program](#)
- [Information on Liquid Biopsy Research](#)

VA Patient Navigation and Support:

- [VA Patient Advocates](#)
- [Veteran Service Organizations Directory](#)
- [Cancer Support Community](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Radon Testing and Information](#)
- [American Lung Association - Lung Cancer Basics](#)
- [GO2 for Lung Cancer](#)

Full Transcript

[Full transcript available above]

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Medical Disclaimer

The content shared in this episode reflects personal experiences and general information about lung cancer screening, diagnosis, treatment, and research. This information should not substitute for professional medical guidance. Please consult your healthcare provider or VA medical team for personalized medical advice, screening recommendations, and treatment decisions tailored to your individual health situation and military service history.

Important Note for Veterans: If you served in the military and have concerns about toxic exposures (including burn pits, Agent Orange, asbestos, or other hazards), contact the VA to discuss your eligibility for health benefits under the PACT Act and other programs.

Hope With Answers Living With Lung Cancer is produced by Lung Cancer Foundation of America (LCFA). LCFA's mission is to improve lung cancer survivorship by funding transformative science. Learn more at [lcfamerica.org](#).

Key Takeaways from This Episode:

- Lung cancer screening with low-dose CT scans is simple, painless, and can save your life
- The VA now actively screens eligible Veterans—if you're over 50 and have a smoking history, ask about screening
- Early detection makes lung cancer curable—don't wait for symptoms
- Veterans are leading the way in blood donation research for liquid biopsy tests
- The PACT Act has expanded VA healthcare eligibility—check if you qualify
- Biomarker testing can open doors to targeted therapies and clinical trials
- You are your own best advocate—don't be afraid to ask questions and push for the care you deserve

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LCFA's mission is the improvement in survivorship of lung cancer patients through the funding of transformative science.

While raising funds to support lung cancer research, LCFA will raise the public's awareness and serve as a resource for patients or anyone seeking answers, hope, and access to updated treatment information, scientific investigation, and clinical trials.

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