



**Clinical  
Oncological  
Society of  
Australia**

## News brief

Thursday 17 November, 2011

Twitter: [#COSAmeeet](https://twitter.com/COSAmeeet)

# Carers of people with thoracic cancer need help

A study of caregivers and family members of people with thoracic cancer found that they encounter difficulties on many fronts, from communication with healthcare professionals to access to services, a conference of cancer experts in Perth was told today (17/11).

The University of Sydney study undertook in-depth interviews with 43 caregivers and family members of people with thoracic cancer. The study, presented at the Clinical Oncological Society of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting, aimed to establish the psychological impact of caring for people with thoracic cancer, and to identify carers' unmet needs.

The broad concerns expressed by carers in the interviews included the difficult road to diagnosis, and challenges encountered in the healthcare systems such as hampered communication between healthcare professionals and access to services. They also included smoking-related issues such as stigma and conflict about smoking cessation, feeling unprepared for death, and varied communication needs that differed from patient to carer to families with translation requirements.

Lead researcher Dr Haryana Dhillon, from the University of Sydney, said the study had shed light on the needs of this particular group and flagged the way forward for future research. "While the difficulties experienced by carers of thoracic cancer patients reflect experiences of other tumour types, navigating the health care system seems to be more troublesome for these people," she said. "Not uncommonly they are describing communication failures within the system that compound their distress. We need to find ways to support them to care effectively."

### MEDIA CONTACTS

Glen Turner m. 0412 443 212 e. [glen.turner@cancer.org.au](mailto:glen.turner@cancer.org.au)  
Sophie West m. 0404 178 704 e. [Sophie.west@cancer.org.au](mailto:Sophie.west@cancer.org.au)