TCS/18/08 - STRATIFY: Staging by Thoracoscopy in potentially Radically Treatable Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer associated with Minimal Pleural Effusion

Early-stage Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer (NSCLC) can be cured by 'radical treatment', which involves either major surgery *or* combination radiotherapy and chemotherapy. However, up to 50% of radically-treated patients die within 2 years and suffer major side-effects. When a rim of fluid surrounds the lung at diagnosis (called Minimal Pleural Effusion (MiniPE)) recurrence risk is extremely high. Earlier studies based on review of lung cancer databases in S. Korea, Spain and Scotland suggest that MiniPE may reflect incurable metastases on the lining of the lung (pleura) in up to 80% of patients. However current staging tests, including scans such as CT and PET-CT, and simple needle sampling of the pleural fluid frequently miss these. We will perform Local Anaesthetic Thoracoscopy (LAT) in 96 patients with MiniPE and an otherwise radically-treatable NSCLC. LAT involves insertion of a thin telescope into the pleural space under local anaesthetic. LAT is well-tolerated, accurate and safe in larger pleural effusions but has not been used to stage lung cancer before. If LAT proves accurate and safe in THIS setting it could help select curable patients for radical treatment, and protect others from unnecessary risks.