Lung cancer scans urged for some smokers, not all

WASHINGTON • Certain current or former heavy smokers should start getting yearly scans for lung cancer to cut their risk of death from the nation’s top cancer killer, government advisers said this week — even as they stressed that the tests aren’t for everyone.

The long-anticipated decision by the influential U.S. Preventive Services Task Force says these CT scans of the lungs should be offered only to people at especially high risk: those who smoked a pack of cigarettes a day for 30 years or an equivalent amount, such as two packs a day for 15 years — and who are between the ages of 55 and 80.

That’s roughly 10 million people, but not all of them qualify for screening, said the task force’s vice chairman, Dr. Michael LeFevre, a University of Missouri family physician. Even those high-risk people shouldn’t be scanned if they’re not healthy enough to withstand cancer treatment, or if they kicked the habit more than 15 years ago.

Lung cancer kills nearly 160,000 Americans each year. Smoking is the biggest risk factor, and the more and longer people smoke, the higher their risk. Usually, lung cancer is diagnosed too late for treatment to succeed, but until now there hasn’t been a good means of early detection.

The newly recommended screening could prevent as many as 20,000 deaths a year, LeFevre said — if it’s used correctly.

That estimate assumes good candidates seek the scans. There’s no way to know if people at the highest risk will, or if instead the overly anxious will flood testing centers.

Screen the wrong people, “and we could see more harm than good,” LeFevre cautioned. “There’s a lot of room for what I would call people exploiting the recommendation. I can imagine a street-corner imaging center advertising to invite people in.”

Why not screen younger or lighter smokers? There’s no data to tell whether they would be helped. Lung cancer is rare before age 50, and the major study that showed screening could save lives enrolled only heavy smokers starting at age 55.
But screening isn’t harm-free. A suspicious scan is far more likely to be a false alarm than a tumor, LeFevre noted. Yet patients may undergo invasive testing to find out, which in turn can cause complications.

Moreover, radiation accumulated from even low-dose CT scans can raise the risk of cancer. And occasionally, screening detects tumors so small and slow-growing that they never would have threatened the person’s life.

While screening clearly can benefit some people, “the best way to avoid lung cancer death is to stop smoking,” LeFevre added.

The task force proposed the screenings last summer but published its final recommendation Monday in the journal Annals of Internal Medicine. That clears the way for insurers to begin paying for the scans, which cost between $300 and $500, according to the American Lung Association.

Under the Obama administration’s health care law, cancer screenings that are backed by the task force are supposed to be covered with no co-pays, although plans have a year to adopt new recommendations.
Downtown Development Pause

SOME WERE NOT surprised to learn that the complex web of largely buried downtown utility infrastructures — water, electric and sewer — is about to be overwhetned if the accelerated pace of downtown development, some of it high-rise in nature, is allowed to continue. These alarms represent the opportune time for broad reviews of citywide infrastructure amidst growth that’s both enviable and vexing.

Until the recent rash of apartment developments and several high-rise city-owned parking garages began altering the downtown skyline, the central city’s vertical profile was less than it was a half century ago.

Aside from a couple of city-owned parking lots, it’s mostly a case of losses. In October 1963, the upper floors of the three-story O’Rear Building at the northwest corner of 10th and Broadway were removed. Other demolished buildings include the Dom Cloney Laundry at 11S S. Eighth St. — now a parking lot — and the four-story structure that housed O’Rear’s that became a parking lot after a May 1983 fire engulfed the Stephens Endowment Building. In 1991, the Semmons Furniture Building at 901 E. Walnut St. — now a park — was another fire victim. Other demolished buildings include the Dorm Cloyce Laundry at 105 S. Eighth St. — now a parking lot — and the four-story structure that housed Romano’s Pizza at 1100 E. Broadway, now the site of the Alpine Shop.

In the realm of their professional management and technical staffs, Columbia’s city-owned utilities should remain immune from the accelerated pace of downtown development in the aforementioned city-owned utilities. Management of the aforementioned city-owned utilities should remain within the realm of their professional management and technical staffs, leaving for advice from paid consultants whose expertise in those fields is well established. Future electric power needs may be the easiest to provide as energy flows down copper wire "pipes" that are reallocated from existing and already budgeted-for substations. It’s metal pipes of a different sort and diameter — water and sewer — and the flows of liquids they can accommodate that could hasten the need for expensive new construction.

Management and the university impact

Impact of these reductions on the downtown utility infrastructure is rather negligible of course, but our collective failure to anticipate, plan, finance and execute certain infrastructure upgrades has been regrettable, especially given the central city’s vertical profile was less than it was a half century ago.

The heart of the problem

No one has the heart, not to mention the guts and the political willpower, to move the lever when it comes to addressing the downtown street and traffic flow situation. Downtown growth may be stemmed by more than just a shortage of electric power, an adequate supply of water at acceptable pressure and pipes large enough to handle future sewer needs if folks can’t readily move in and out of the area. Some have already given up on downtown Columbia and stoutly refuse to have anything to do with the city’s inner area. Others steel themselves for the experience because they have to be there. Maybe the situation will get so bad that one of these days, something will simply have to be done. For now, a downtown development pause may be refreshing, a breather to take stock of that area in particular as well as infrastructure across the city at large.

COLUMBIABUSINESSTIMES.COM III 29
Virtual vets

Classes begin this month for the University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine’s online master’s program. The biomedical sciences degree with an emphasis in veterinary medicine and surgery is a 30-hour program designed for working vets and vet technicians. The online program allows them to earn their degree without having to relocate or even leave work.

“Our goal is to help students better understand the intersection of veterinary and biomedical sciences as a whole so they can combine their technical knowledge and real-world experience to become more effective in their professions,” says C.B. Chastain, DVM, professor of veterinary medicine and surgery at MU. The same professors who teach in the classroom setting teach the classes held online. And even better than the convenience of the program? All students pay in-state tuition, regardless of location.

Airport dollars

The Department of Transportation confirmed that it contributes 100,621 jobs with payrolls totaling $3.1 million to the Missouri economy through the 108 airports it supports. The total economic output of Missouri’s system of airports is estimated at $11.1 billion, which equals 4.3 percent of the gross state product. During the past decade, Missouri airports have contributed 17.1 percent more to the economy, and Don Elliott, airport manager at Columbia Regional Airport, says it was predicted that 2013 would be the year for the most passengers flying in and out of that airport.

Treehouse Treasures

Sara Cochran, an assistant director at Drury University’s Edward Jones Center for Entrepreneurship in 2011, decided she needed to experience firsthand the trials of being an entrepreneur. The outcome? Treehouse Treasures, an online boutique specializing in eco-friendly items for babies and children, which launched on Sept. 25. Cochran is now a higher education doctoral student at MU who participates on the #BOOM Task Force, is a member of the Columbia Chamber of Commerce and supports other local startups.

MIZ-BIZ

Graduates of the Trulaske College of Business now have the opportunity to leave college with specialized skills in risk management and insurance for corporations, individuals and businesses. The $1 million in donations was funded with the help of corporate and private donors such as Duncan and Shirley Matteson, Tom and Betty Scott, Peter and Ellen Clune, Missouri Employers Mutual, Columbia Insurance Group and Shelter Insurance. The introduction of this program, along with recognition from Bloomberg Business Week about the school’s execMBA program, gives the college a lot to celebrate in its centennial year.
Smoke signals

Research at MU reminds smokers that their habits are the No. 1 cause of preventable cancer. According to the Centers for Disease Control, approximately 200,000 people in the United States are diagnosed each year with lung cancer. Although other factors play into the diagnosis of lung cancer, smoking remains the single most frequent cause. More than 150,000 people die from this disease each year.

“In order to understand lung cancer, you need to know about smoking and the effects of secondhand tobacco,” says Dr. Vamsi Guntur, a pulmonologist at University Hospital.

The good news? “The decrease we’ve seen in smoking rates in the U.S. during the past several decades has saved countless lives,” Guntur says. “We still have a very long way to go, but history has shown we can make tremendous strides toward eliminating lung cancer by reducing tobacco use.”

Pet therapy

Grieving is a natural phase in the passing of a loved one, and in today’s world, there are numerous resources and outlets to help soothe someone who has recently experienced a loss. However, the MU College of Veterinary Medicine noticed a lack of resources for those who are struggling with the death of an animal. Together in Grief, Easing Recovery (TIGER) is a new grief counseling program that caters to people suffering from pet loss. Francesca Tocco, a doctoral student in the MU Sinclair School of Nursing and the MU Research Center for Human-Animal Interaction (ReCHAI), is using her background to help pet owners come to terms with their loss. Rebecca Johnson, director of ReCHAI, says it’s a great opportunity to put research into action. For questions and inquiries about the program, email mucvmvmtgriefsupport@missouri.edu.

Fighting the flu

Forty-one percent of enrolled Boone County elementary and middle school students received flu vaccinations during clinics held from Oct. 1 until Nov. 6, 2013. All 7,651 students received the free vaccination from public health nurses who were supported by MU Children’s Hospital and the David B. Lichtenstein Foundation. Vaccinations are still available at 1005 W. Worley in Columbia, and adults and children are encouraged to come in from Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. No appointment is necessary.

Roots N Blues N BBQ

An astonishing 35 countries were represented at the 2013 Roots N Blues N BBQ Festival that took place from Sept. 20 to 22. A total of 22,250 fans traveled to Columbia to experience the music, food and entertainment of the festival. Roots N Blues brought in $1,205,842 in economic impact to the city of Columbia and the state of Missouri, according to the Convention and Visitors Bureau Economic Impact Study. The Blues in Schools program saw growth from the previous year by adding four more participating schools. The half marathon and 10K races had 1,378 runners, and the location change to Stephens Park offered 49 acres of space to utilize. Next year’s festival will take place from Sept. 26 to 28.

Safety tech

Tech Electronics is now offering a new Technical Service Desk that will allow customers to better maintain life-safety and communications systems. Across six area locations, the service provides faster response and a more cost-effective way to maintain the systems. “Our mission is to help our customers work smarter, feel
safer and collaborate more effectively,” says John Pile, director of Tech Electronics of Columbia. “We are excited to offer a more convenient, less expensive way to resolve issues our customers may be experiencing with their life-safety and communications systems, regardless of their location.”

**Granted success**

Students at William Woods University won a $33,000 grant for SERVE, a nonprofit social service agency in Fulton. Using the grant money, the nonprofit was able to purchase equipment for its food pantry. The winning students were learning successful techniques in their grant-writing class at WWU. Katie Atterberry and Heather Rogers wrote a proposal to the Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri, which is providing the funding to SERVE.

**Eighth best!**

Missouri students’ math and reading scores have continued to increase since 2009, and Missouri is now ranked the eighth-highest state for high school graduates, according to the Missouri Department of Economic Development. Science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) occupations are now looking toward Missouri to find a highly skilled workforce. More than 1 million Missourians currently hold a bachelor’s degree or higher.

**Running at Rock Bridge**

Rock Bridge Elementary will now have a track on the school’s property, thanks to grants, donations and pledges that helped the school reach its financial goal. The fundraising committee was made up of Rock Bridge parents and staff, and they began their endeavor last spring. The new track will be built on the east side of the playground. Local contributors include Boone Electric and the MFA Oil Foundation. Construction on the track will begin as soon as Columbia Public Schools completes an updated HVAC system on site.

**PGA**

A new Purchased Gas Adjustment offers Ameren customers lower rates for natural gas this winter. Jim Massmann, gas supply director, says Ameren Missouri has secured adequate natural gas supplies to meet customers’ needs during the upcoming heating season. A significant portion of the gas supply costs are hedged or price protected to insulate customers from market price volatility. The lower rates result in lower wholesale costs. The PGA has been effective since Nov. 1, 2013.

**International studies**

Missouri is ranked 12th in the nation for the number of international students enrolled in state colleges and universities. During the 2012-2013 academic year, more than 17,300 international students chose to study within the state of Missouri, according to the Institute of International Education’s Open Doors 2013 report. More than one-third of those students have temporarily relocated from China, while other high-represented countries include India, South Korea, Japan and Saudi Arabia. MU enrolls the most international students with 2,490 students. In addition, the number of Missouri students studying abroad has increased from 4,650 to 4,938.
In College Bowls, Losing Can Be More Profitable Than Winning

NO MU MENTION

It’s football-bowl season, and there’s a lot of money to be made—for TV networks, coaches, conferences, and bowl executives—and very little of it hangs on which college teams come out on top.

The six largest conferences grossed $32-million to $52-million in bowl revenue last year, win or lose. In most conferences, that windfall is evenly distributed among all conference members—even those who didn’t qualify for a bowl game. Conferences usually kick in an extra $2-million or so to bowlbound universities for the costs of sending hundreds of football players, cheerleaders, band members, administrators, and VIPs to the games. But in many cases, that’s not enough to cover expenses.

One reason is that universities are contractually obligated to buy thousands of tickets to the bowl games at face value, which they are stuck with if they can’t sell them all. To make things difficult, the bowl organizers have been undercutting the universities by selling reduced-price tickets on daily-deal sites like Groupon and LivingSocial, USA Today reports. And ticket sales to bowl games have declined since 2007-8.

Add that up, and 40 percent of the public universities that played in the five Bowl Championship Series bowls from 2005 to 2010 lost money, even after conferences provided extra funds to cover unsold tickets, an investigation by The Arizona Republic found.

For example, last year Florida State exceeded its bowl expenses by $1.4-million, according to USA Today, even though the Atlantic Coast Conference chipped in some of the $2.1-million that the university owed for unsold tickets to the Orange Bowl. Florida State still came out in the black after receiving its ACC bowl payout.

But perhaps it could have fared better by playing worse. A fellow ACC member, Boston College, for example, went 2-10 on the season and failed to qualify for a bowl, but it still received the same bowl payout as FSU, and the Eagles didn’t have to cover those extra bowl-related expenses.

Of course, the actual value of appearing in a bowl game goes beyond a simple cost-benefit analysis of game-day expenses versus revenues. Universities relish the national exposure, which can help drive recruitment, alumni enthusiasm, home-game ticket sales, apparel sales, and other revenue sources.
Nevertheless, most fans probably don’t realize how much playing in a bowl game can end up costing a university. Proponents of the bowl system say it levels out over time: Colleges that play well and lose money on a bowl appearance this year will receive profits in the years when they don’t make it to a bowl. Tell that to Florida State, which has gone more than 30 straight years without missing a bowl game.

Perhaps this is the year FSU will take its bowl appearance to the bank. For the first time in more than a decade, the Seminoles will play on Monday in the BCS National Championship game, which will bring the football program immeasurable value over the next several years—in revenue, recruitment, and pride.

But despite lofty promises from college-bowl promoters that “everybody is a winner at a college bowl game,” it may be that the teams that don’t make it to the games will come away as the biggest winners.
MU team makes finals in national tax competition

By KARYN SPORY

Tuesday, December 31, 2013 at 2:00 pm

After racking up the 'likes' on Facebook, team Green Machine from the University of Missouri Trulaske College of Business will be heading to Washington, D.C., next week to compete in the finals of PricewaterhouseCoopers' tax competition.

In November, team Green Machine — Xiaoke "Jessica" Cui and Megan Libbert, both graduate accountancy students; Hai Kim, a senior accountancy major; Kenny Cygeirt, a junior business administration major; and Hanna Ingram, a freshman business major — competed against other teams from the University of Missouri System in the challenge. Their win landed them in the semifinals with teams from the University of Bentley in Waltham, Mass., and the University of Georgia.

To make it into the finals, teams had to post a one-minute video online describing how they prepared for the challenge. The team that garnered the most likes would take the fifth and final spot and present its tax solution in Washington in January. MU did just that with nearly 15,000 votes, beating out second place — the University of Bentley — by nearly 1,500 votes, Cygeirt said.

Cygeirt said in the month span between making it into the finals and when they leave for the East Coast, team members have been making travel plans and reworking their final pitch. Cygeirt said being on winter break has made preparing a little difficult, but the team has been in touch via email and Facebook.

"I was excited not just because we're going to D.C., but our school hasn't gotten that far in the competition in so long," Kim said, adding it has been at least a decade since MU has made it to the finals.

The team will fly out to D.C. on Jan. 9. They will go to the Newseum and then participate in some team-building exercises and a meet-and-greet.
"We have a day to just learn about the company … and network," Kim said. For PricewaterhouseCoopers, "it's not just a competition, it's a recruiting and an interview tool to learn about some of the candidates who apply for" positions in the company.

One member of the team — Cui — will miss the competition because she begins training in Houston for her new job with PricewaterhouseCoopers.

The second day, the team will present its tax solutions to partners of PricewaterhouseCoopers in a boardroom style setting, which Kim said has helped prepare the students for the real world.

"As students, we learn from textbooks about what tax or accounting is, and it's sometimes hard to connect the dots on how business leaders use that on a day-to-day basis, so it's really helped us to learn more about what that job is like," Kim said.

The finalists — teams from the University of Delaware, the University of Florida, the University of Southern California, the University of Virginia and MU — work for a fictional Northeastern state dealing with plummeting fuel tax revenue. Governments use fuel tax revenue to pay for maintenance and road and infrastructure repairs, and with the increase of green or electric vehicles, which use the roads just as much, the question is how to charge a tax so everyone pays even if they use little to no gasoline.