



CANCER KEYS

Lung cancer: False negative chest X-rays

False negative chest X-rays

The main investigation for suspected lung cancer in primary care is a chest X-ray. However, reports show that some patients with normal chest X-rays still transpire to have lung cancer.

Potential pitfall:

Although most large lung cancers can be seen on a chest X-ray, a study in the *British Journal of General Practice* in 2006 showed that there is a false negative rate of over 23% - more than 1 in 5.

Helpful hint:

Chest X-rays are a useful investigation, but be aware of false negative results. If a chest X-ray is negative, but there is still clinical suspicion, either refer the patient for a computed tomography (CT) scan (if available), or refer the patient via a suspected cancer pathway.

Access the GatewayC **Lung Cancer - Early Diagnosis** course by visiting: www.gatewayc.org.uk