



BRIDGING THE GAP

Enhancing Equitable Access & Innovation in Lung Cancer Care in Japan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Japan represents a global benchmark in lung cancer care. The country demonstrates excellence across every pillar—from early detection and universal access to treatment, to groundbreaking research and holistic palliative care. Anchored by a robust network of specialized cancer centers and a highly responsive public health system, Japan's approach offers critical lessons for countries aiming to reduce lung cancer mortality and improve quality of life.

A standout feature of Japan's model is its early and effective implementation of LDCT screening programs, which, combined with a strong prevention culture and national insurance coverage, has helped achieve one of the highest five-year survival rates in the world (32%).

This brief outlines the foundational elements of Japan's success and presents key takeaways for international adaptation and collaboration.



INTRODUCTION

A Model of Integration, Access, and Innovation

Japan has transformed lung cancer from a death sentence into a survivable disease for many, thanks to its integrated healthcare strategy that spans prevention, early detection, treatment, and palliative care. The country has not only developed world-class infrastructure but has also embedded cancer care into the cultural and clinical mainstream.

With centers like the **National Cancer Center Japan (Tokyo)** and **Osaka International Cancer Institute**, and the support of **universal health coverage**, Japan's framework combines access with innovation—making it a model worth replicating.

Japan holds an **Overall Lung Cancer Maturity Level of 5 – Leading**, reflecting its exceptional performance across all key dimensions of care.



Japan Ranks at Level 5 – Leading in the Lung Cancer Care Maturity Framework



LUNG CANCER IN JAPAN

System Strengths and Strategic Levers

Japan's maturity in lung cancer care reflects sustained investments and system-wide coordination. The following table highlights how each pillar contributes to its high-performance status and where continued investment is warranted for global leadership.

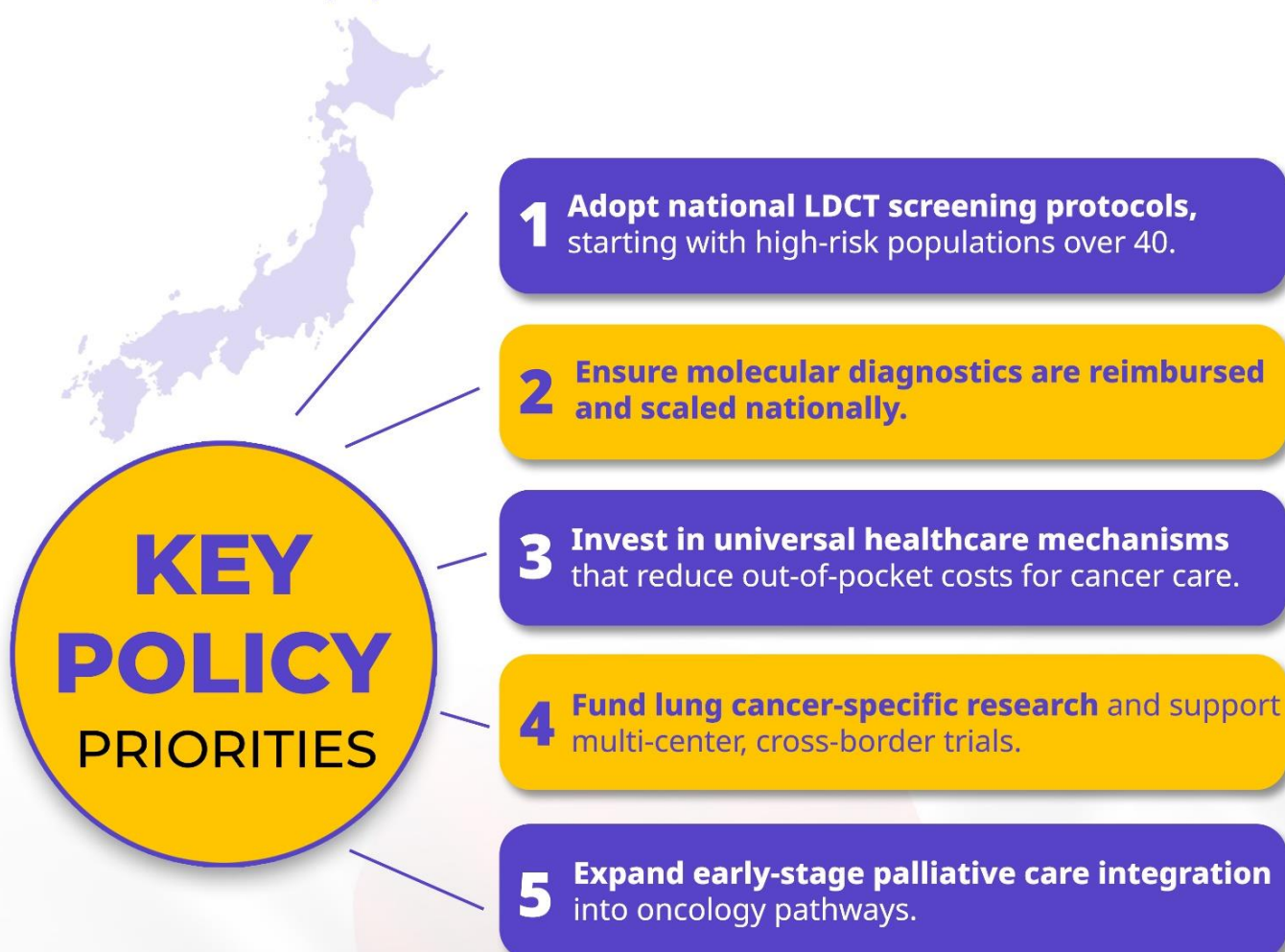
Pillar	Current Status	Barrier	Policy Action
Early Detection & Diagnosis	Nationwide LDCT screening for high-risk adults over 40; >50% detected early.	No major barriers.	Maintain high adherence and quality control; explore AI-assisted screening to reduce radiologist burden.
Biomarker Testing & Molecular Diagnostics	Routine and reimbursed testing for EGFR, ALK, PD-L1, etc.	Minimal barriers; widely accessible.	Expand real-time data platforms linking diagnostics to personalized treatment decisions.
Treatment Access	Covered by universal insurance: chemo, immunotherapy, robotic surgery.	No access gap.	Ensure equitable rollout of next-gen therapies across prefectures; invest in training for advanced techniques.
Research & Innovation	Over \$1B in oncology R&D annually; strong in EGFR-targeted and immunotherapy trials.	No critical funding gap.	Foster more international multi-center trials; create open data registries for global collaboration.
Public Awareness & Prevention	High-impact campaigns + smoking cessation policies; strong public participation.	Low stigma, high literacy.	Integrate screening reminders into annual health checks; expand workplace prevention programs.
Palliative & End-of-Life Care	Highly developed; includes hospice-at-home and pain management.	Minor regional variability.	Expand palliative care training to all clinical disciplines; continue community-based home hospice care scaling.



CONCLUSION & Global Lessons

Japan's journey reflects what is possible when lung cancer care is treated not as a series of isolated interventions, but as an integrated public health priority. From **early LDCT screening and biomarker-based personalized treatment to research leadership and compassionate palliative care**, Japan's comprehensive model demonstrates that high survival and patient dignity are achievable goals.

As countries look to reform or develop their lung cancer strategies, **Japan provides a replicable, scalable, and humane blueprint**—one that balances innovation with access and outcomes with equity.



Japan's success is not just a product of wealth or technology—it is the outcome of vision, planning, and prioritization. It offers a roadmap not only for high-income countries but also for middle-income nations seeking to leapfrog to better cancer care outcomes.