



THAILAND

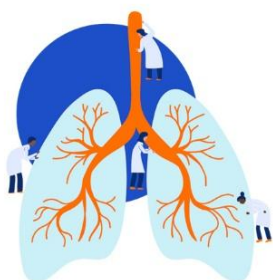
BRIDGING THE GAP

Enhancing Equitable Access & Innovation in Lung Cancer Care in Thailand

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Lung Cancer remains one of the leading causes of cancer-related deaths in Thailand, with survival rates below 15%. While Thailand has made strides in healthcare with its Universal Health Coverage (UHC) program, lung cancer care faces significant barriers. These include limited access to specialized care, high treatment costs, insufficient early detection, and inadequate palliative services. The country's lung cancer survival rates are among the lowest globally, and this brief outlines the systemic gaps and recommends targeted policy reforms to address them.

Yes, progress has been made—particularly in urban centers like Bangkok—but rural and underserved areas continue to face challenges in accessing timely diagnosis and appropriate treatment. This policy brief proposes concrete steps to improve equity and quality in lung cancer care for all Thais, regardless of geography or socioeconomic status.



INTRODUCTION

A Critical Disease with Persistent Disparities

Lung cancer is one of the deadliest cancers in Thailand, with survival rates still alarmingly low. Despite having some specialized cancer centers like King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital in Bangkok, the majority of the population, particularly in rural areas, lacks access to advanced lung cancer care. The high cost of treatment, including immunotherapy, and limited insurance coverage prevent many patients from receiving timely and appropriate care.

Thailand is currently classified as **Level 3 - Developing** in the Cancer Care Maturity Framework. While there is a foundational healthcare system in place, major gaps remain in early detection, treatment access, and equitable coverage across the country. Addressing these gaps is crucial to improving patient outcomes and reducing the burden of lung cancer in the country.



Thailand Ranks at Level 3 – Lung Cancer Maturity Framework



LUNG CANCER IN THAILAND

Current Landscape and Systemic Gaps

The following table outlines Thailand's maturity level across key pillars of lung cancer care, identifies systemic barriers, and proposes targeted policy actions to address these gaps:

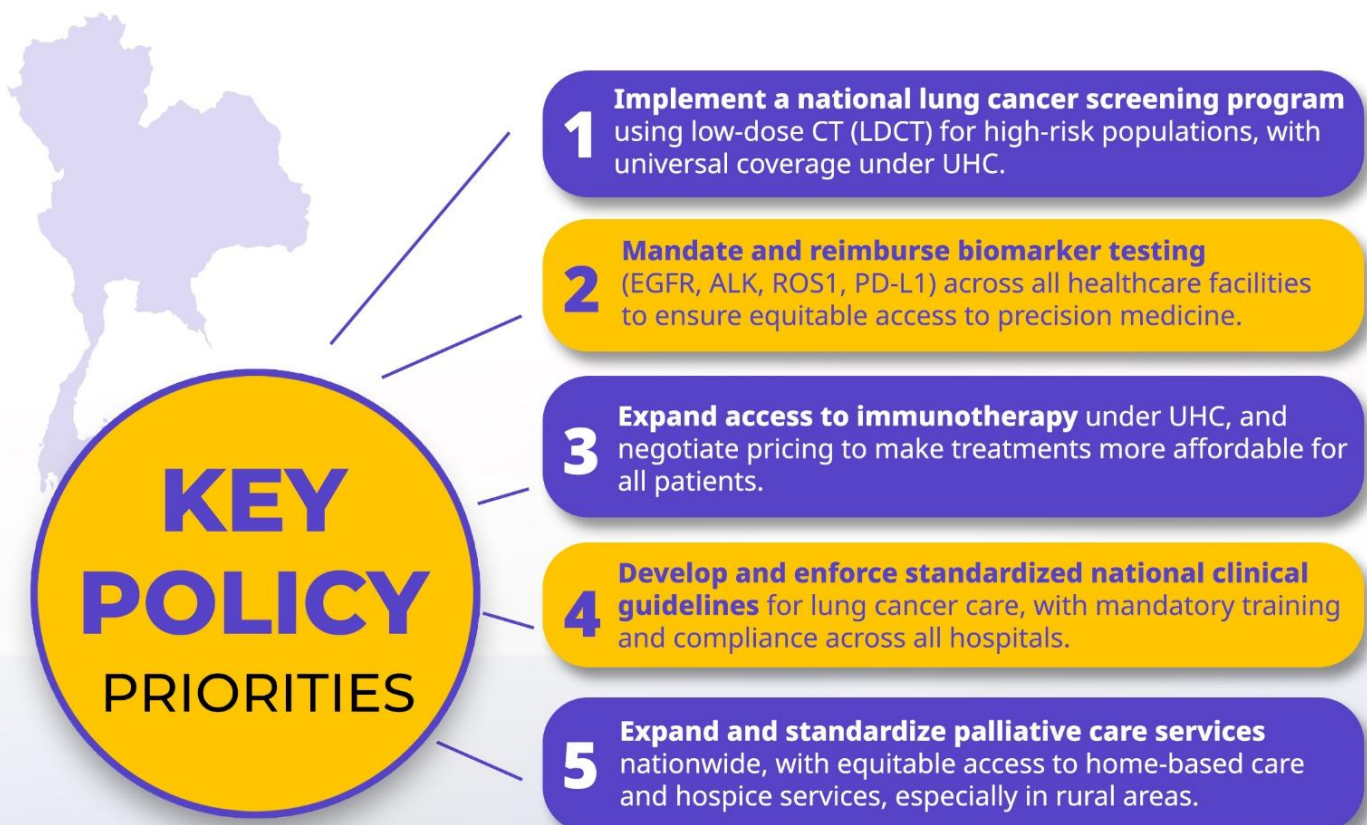
Pillar	Current Status	Barrier	Policy Action
Early Detection & Diagnosis	No nationwide lung cancer screening program; LDCT is not covered under public health insurance.	Yes, some screening exists—but lack of coverage and awareness make it inaccessible for most patients.	Implement a national LDCT screening program for high-risk populations. Expand coverage under UHC and improve public awareness.
Biomarker & Molecular Testing	Available at major hospitals in Bangkok, but not consistently across the country.	Yes, tests are available—but cost barriers and regional disparities limit access for many patients.	Standardize and reimburse biomarker testing (EGFR, ALK, ROS1, PD-L1) under the UHC program. Expand access to regional diagnostic hubs.
Treatment Access	Treatment is available in major centers, but immunotherapy is expensive and often unaffordable for many patients.	Yes, treatments exist—but the cost of immunotherapy, sometimes over ฿ 100,000 (\$3,000) per session, is prohibitively expensive.	Implement a national strategy for universal access to immunotherapy under UHC. Introduce price controls or subsidies to reduce treatment costs.
Clinical Guidelines	Some guidelines exist, but they are not consistently followed, and not all hospitals have access to them.	Yes, guidelines are available—but their application is inconsistent across the country, especially in rural areas.	Develop and enforce national lung cancer treatment guidelines, with regular updates and mandatory compliance for all healthcare facilities.
Palliative & Survivorship Care	Palliative care services are limited and unevenly distributed, especially in rural areas.	Yes, palliative care services exist—but their accessibility and quality vary greatly between urban and rural regions.	Expand palliative care services and ensure equitable access to home-based care. Provide funding for hospice services in rural hospitals and integrate survivorship care pathways.



CONCLUSION & Call to Action

Thailand's lung cancer care system is at a crossroads. Yes, there are some specialized centers in urban areas, and immunotherapies are available—but these advances remain out of reach for many, especially in rural regions. The country's low survival rates are a stark reminder that significant improvements are needed across the entire care continuum.

This is not just a healthcare issue—it's a social justice challenge. With focused investment, political will, and concerted policy action, Thailand has the opportunity to improve lung cancer care and reduce disparities between urban and rural regions.



Lung cancer care in Thailand is in urgent need of reform. By addressing systemic gaps in early detection, treatment access, and palliative care, the country can improve patient outcomes and reduce the burden of lung cancer on its population. Thailand has the resources and the potential to make significant strides in lung cancer care—what is needed now is the political commitment and investment to ensure that all patients, regardless of their location or financial situation, receive the care they need.