



### Urban lighting linked to breast cancer

A new U.S. study has found that exposure to city lights might increase the risk of breast cancer. Researchers tracked almost 110,000 U.S. women, followed as part of a study of nurses from 1989-2013. The study found a direct relationship between a woman's neighbourhood nighttime light level before diagnosis and her later risk of developing breast cancer: the higher the light level, the higher the risk. (Xinhua)



### Talk therapy works in some PTSD cases

A study says that a talk therapy program may help people who have served in the U.S. military and have killed in combat and suffer from nightmares, hypervigilance to perceived threats and numbness to people and activities that once made them happy. The study involved 33 veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and enrolled them in one-on-one sessions.

# Death rates higher for 'alternative' cancer cures

Paris

People who choose alternative cures for common cancers are up to five times more likely to die compared to those opting for standard treatments, the lead scientist of a new study said.

The risk of death five years after diagnosis "was highest for breast and colon cancer," said lead author Skyler Johnson from the Yale School of Medicine in New Haven, Connecticut -- 5.6 and 4.6 times greater respectively.

Lung cancer patients who spurned surgery, radiation or chemotherapy in favour of herbs and vitamin, homoeopathy, special diets or other unorthodox therapies were more than twice as likely to die over the same period, he reported last week in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute.

Five-year survival rates for prostate cancer remained high -- around 90 percent -- for both conventional and alternative treatments, but this was not necessarily evidence that the alternative therapies were as effective.

"Prostate cancer usually grows very slowly in the early stages so few people die," Johnson explained by email.

Faced with poor prognoses or painful courses of chemotherapy, which can cause severe nausea and weakness, many cancer patients place their faith in a wide range of treatments dismissed by most medical doctors as useless at best.

These include probiotics, vitamins and minerals; traditional Indian and Chinese methods such as Ayurvedic medicine and acupuncture; homoeopathy and naturopathy; chiropractic or osteopathic manipulation; as well as yoga, Tai Qi and Qi Gong, all of which involve breath control.

Mind-over-matter approaches also include prayer, meditation, and guided imagery, in which one visualises one's cancer in order to overcome it.

Researchers led by Johnson identified 281 people in the United States with the four most common types of cancer -- breast, prostate, lung and



A standard cancer treatment colon -- who turned towards one or more of these unproven treatments when diagnosed.

The team compared their

health outcomes with those of 560 other cancer patients of comparable age, also taking into account race and different

health factors.

On average, the first group were 2.5 times more likely to die within five years of

diagnosis.

"For several reasons, I believe this may be an underestimate," Johnson said.

To begin with, the data only covered only initial treatment, which means that some of the patients who first sought out alternative cures may have switched to standard treatments as their disease progressed, thus prolonging their lives.

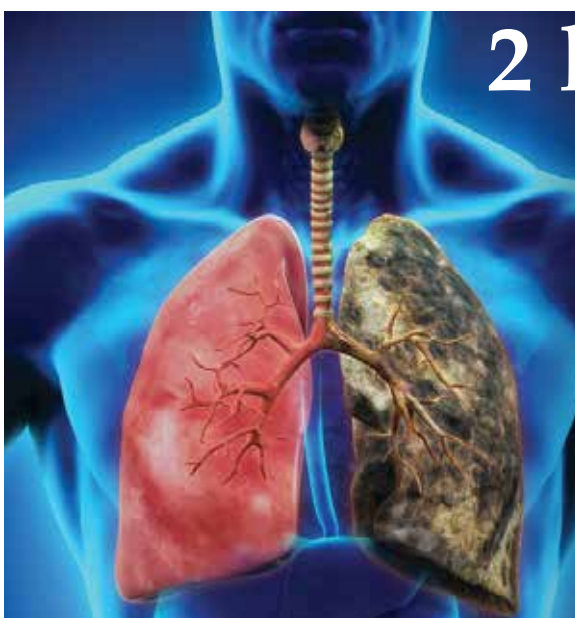
It is also likely, he added, that the non-conventional medicine cohort was healthier, younger and had higher income and education -- attributes that translate into better survival rates.

"We don't know the exact number of people that make the decision to pursue alternative medicine instead of conventional cancer treatment," Johnson said.

Patients are reluctant to confide in doctors who are likely to frown upon their choices, he added.

But, he noted, all the miracle cancer cures on offer probably add up to a multi-billion dollar business. (AFP)

## 2 lung diseases killed 3.6m in 2015



Paris

The two most common chronic lung diseases claimed 3.6 million lives worldwide in 2015, according to a tally published in The Lancet Respiratory Medicine.

About 3.2 million people succumbed that year to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), caused mainly by smoking and pollution, while 400,000 people died from asthma.

COPD is a group of lung conditions -- including emphysema and bronchitis

-- that make it difficult to breathe.

Asthma is twice as prevalent, but COPD is eight times more deadly, the study found.

Both diseases can be treated affordably, but many sufferers are often left undiagnosed, misdiagnosed or under-treated.

COPD was the fourth-ranked cause of death worldwide in 2015, according to the World Health Organization, behind heart disease (nine million), stroke (six million) and lower respiratory infections (just over 3.2 million).

Researchers led by Theo Vos, a professor at the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, analysed data from 188 countries to estimate, in each one, the number of cases and deaths annually from 1990 to 2015.

COPD prevalence and death rates declined over that period, but the overall numbers increased -- with nearly 12 percent more deaths -- because of population growth.

For asthma, prevalence went up by almost 13 percent to

358 million people worldwide, but the number of deaths dropped by more than a quarter.

"These diseases have received less attention than other prominent non-communicable diseases like cardiovascular disease, cancer or diabetes," Vos said in a statement.

The countries with the highest concentration of people disabled by COPD in 2015 were Papua New Guinea, India, Lesotho and Nepal, the study showed. (AFP)