

**At 10:00 am, June 22, 2004 Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) gave the following speech . . .**

“Mr. President, again, I sort of do this in the early morning, really to have it out of the way, but it’s also a very important message because it’s something that most people don’t know, and it has to do with an issue of healthcare. It’s emergency health crisis, I think, and really comes to a fundamental question which most people cannot answer, and it has to do with cancer and cancer among women. The question is -- and I do ask people to be thinking what the appropriate answer is -- is, what is the deadliest cancer in women today? What is the leading cause of cancer death among 55% of our population today, women? And most people will think breast cancer or cervical cancer or ovarian cancer or one of the gynecological cancers. And it is not. The deadliest of cancer, is lung cancer. I mention that because it is preventable and it doesn’t have to be that way. And, therefore, it really comes with education. And, therefore, I want to take just three or four minutes and comment on it.

The Journal of the American Medical Association this spring published the astonishing finding that lung cancer is the number one cause of cancer death in American women. In fact, breast cancer, all the gynecological cancers, if you add all those up, still doesn’t equal to the number of people who die -- number of women who die from lung cancer. The female death rate from lung cancer has risen 600% over the last six decades. The last lung cancer operation I did was about 10 years ago. And since then the death rate has increased. So the problem is getting worse. The death rate continues to grow even though the rate of smoking women has begun to taper off since the 1960’s.

And the whole point is that lung cancer can continue to strike even after someone stops smoking. Lung cancer is the deadliest of all cancers. It tends to spread to the brain. It tends to spread to the bones. It’s usually diagnosed very late. And the five-year survival, which is the end point that we in medicine use, is very very low. If you take all women who are diagnosed with lung cancer from 1992 to 1999, only 12% -- only about one out of ten, survive five years. In the JAMA article, the Journal of the American Medical Association article, the survival rates, according to the research, are -- and to use his words -- dismal. It’s interesting that the disease affects women differently than men. Probably estrogen plays a role in that. We see that female smokers suffer a higher result of genetic damage from the smoke and the ingredients in smoke. Women are -- females genetically are less able to repair whatever genetic damage is done by the smoke.

It is an epidemic, and I mention it because it’s an epidemic in my mind in this country with these high death rates, but also the rate of smoking is increasing across the world. So it becomes pandemic when you look at what’s happening in Asia or a continent that I go to on a regular basis: Africa, where smoking is gaining in popularity, and, thus, lung cancer and death will be increasing in decades to come. The good thing about it, you can prevent it. You can prevent it. About up to 80% of lung cancer is caused by one thing, and that is smoking. It’s as simple as that. A lot of people try to dance around it, but it’s as simple as that. It doesn’t matter, statistically, at least it doesn’t matter whether or not you’re smoking light cigarettes or regular, even heavy smokers versus social smokers. There’s no such thing as a safe cigarette today. You can quit, and that’s tough to do.

I've counseled hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of patients, being a heart surgeon and a lung surgeon, and a lung cancer surgeon before, I've counseled hundreds of patients, probably thousands of patients, and it is tough to quit smoking. But nevertheless, if you put your mind to it, you can quit. And if you quit, you can reduce that risk. The best thing we can do is have people never start. And that means that we have an obligation to take the very latest data, science, results which we know today and educate the American people. And I would agree educate people in high school today, because the easiest thing to do is to keep people from smoking, starting to smoke up front. So I urge my colleagues and educators and parents and the media to convey that message loud and clear.

We know where smoking leads. It leads to addiction and it leads to cancer. It contributes to heart disease. It contributes to stroke, blood vessel disease, cardiovascular disease. We need to educate young women to the consequences of smoking before they have done irreparable damage to their lungs. Although I know my colleagues are not going to read the Journal of the American Medical Association, the article itself is factual, very well-done, and I feel at least I have an obligation to share that with my colleagues so they can share the current state-of-the-art with their constituents and reverse what is a growing challenge to women's health. Mr. President, I yield the floor."