EBUS-TBNA in North America

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Ever since the introduction of endobronchial ultrasound-guided transbronchial needle aspiration (EBUS-TBNA) in 2002, this minimally invasive procedure has been acquired by many centres around the world. EBUS-TBNA is one of the most significant advances in the field of bronchology and is becoming an important part of clinical practice for bronchoscopists.

Currently, EBUS-TBNA systems are operational in over 1,000 institutes around the world and more than 100,000 procedures are being performed annually. In particular, 42 EBUS-TBNA systems at 38 institutes are now being used in Canada as of December 2010. At the Toronto General Hospital, EBUS-TBNA has been performed since 2006. Currently we have three EBUS-TBNA systems and 8 dedicated EBUS-TBNA bronchoscopes within the University Health Network. The Interventional Thoracic Surgery Program led by Dr. Yasufuku runs EBUS training courses and continues to train physicians from around the world. The Interventional Thoracic Surgery Suite with state of the art equipments is one of the core facilities for Interventional Thoracic Surgery and Interventional Pulmonology in North America.

EBUS-TBNA is now accepted as a minimally invasive modality for initial mediastinal staging in lung cancer patients with mediastinal adenopathy. Recent studies show that EBUS-TBNA has equivalent sensitivity to mediastinoscopy for lung cancer staging. However, mediastinoscopy has higher negative predictive values compared to EBUS-TBNA and there is no evidence to suggest that EBUS-TBNA will replace mediastinoscopy.

Many training programs have been developed in North America and now there are more than 28 training courses being held annually. Most of the courses are run by Academic centres, but also organized by professional medical societies (ACCP, ATS, AATS, STS).

EBUS-TBNA is a minimally invasive and accurate procedure which is repeatable; therefore, samples can be used for research in addition to diagnosis. EBUS-TBNA is a procedure that is certainly here to stay in bronchology.