

Treatment Team for Interstitial Lung Disease

At the Heidelberg Center for Interstitial Lung Diseases, specialists from various departments work together to develop the best possible therapies.

Interstitial lung diseases are many-sided and complex. The term interstitial lung disease is currently used to describe more than 100 different diseases. The smallest common multiple here is the pathological inflammatory reaction of the connective tissue fibers, including the lungs. Typical complaints of these diseases are dry cough and shortness of breath, which worsen over the course of the disease. Thus, interstitial lung diseases are often not recognized in general medical practice because the symptoms are non-distinct and there is a high risk of mistaken diagnosis.

What is the diagnostic process?

Assessment generally includes a detailed history, typically with questionnaires. In addition, various pulmonary function tests and blood tests are carried out as well as a central "thin-layer" computer tomography scan of the lungs. Lung fibrosis can occur as independent lung disease; very often, the lung is only one of the affected organs. Thus, meticulous work by many specialist disciplines is required to make an exact classification of illness.

Specialists consult together

In our center for interstitial and rare lung diseases, an interdisciplinary team led by Prof. Kreuter and Prof. Herth addresses patient prognoses and clarifies the various types of interstitial lung diseases and lung fibrosis in close cooperation with other specialties. Interdisciplinary meetings are held weekly with radiologists and pulmonologists, but also with rheumatologists, dermatologists, cardiologists and/or hemo-oncologists. Thus, it can be ensured that patients are offered the best possible therapy.

After many years of experience, it is evident that an interdisciplinary approach is the strongest tool in the treatment of interstitial lung diseases. Only discussion among various specialists enables evaluation of the severity of various lung diseases and also the making of interdisciplinary therapy decisions.

Interstitial lung disease as a medical focus is too specialized for an individual clinician to provide complete information. Patients assigned to our outpatient clinic are guaranteed consultation among all of the most important specialist departments involved.

Patients can also be allowed to participate in a study. Thanks to many years of specialized expertise, modern therapeutic options are available.