

Talking Points: Benefits of the Federal Investment in Cancer Programs

Timing: All year

Target: ALL Members of Congress

Core Message:

The federal investment in cancer research, education, outreach and screening programs is both necessary and highly effective. Great progress has been made – but much more must be done to truly win the war on cancer.

- ★ The nation has made great strides in cancer research and application (education, screening, treatment) and has realized important gains against many types of cancer. However, many other cancers have yet to see any real progress. For this reason, the nation must increase its investment in federal cancer programs.
- ★ Cancer has a major financial impact on the United States. According to estimates from the National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute at NIH, cancers cost the U.S. more than \$170 billion in 2002. This includes \$60 billion for direct medical costs and more than \$110 billion in lost productivity.

Progress:

- ★ There are nearly 10 million cancer survivors in the US today compared to 3 million in 1971 when the National Cancer Act was passed.
- ★ Death rates from the four most common cancers (lung, breast, prostate, & colorectal) continue to decline. Overall, Americans have experienced a 7% decline in mortality from cancer.
- ★ The nation's investment in cancer research has resulted in the development of molecularly targeted drugs, such as Gleevec, that destroy only cancer cells and leave other cells and tissues unaffected.

- ★ National Cancer Institute research led to the development of a blood test to screen for prostate cancer in the early stages. In the past five years, annual deaths due to prostate cancer have declined by 28%.
- ★ The National Breast & Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, created in 1990, has screened more than 1.75 million women and diagnosed approximately 14,446 breast cancers; 55,210 precancerous cervical lesions; and 1,020 cervical cancers.
- ★ Before CDC's National Program of Cancer Registries was started in 1994, 10 states had NO registries and most states lacked the resources to gather complete data. In 2002, CDC supported registries and the use of registry data in 45 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, the Republic of Palau, and the Virgin Islands.

Continuing Need and the Benefits of Increased Investment:

- ★ Many cancers, such as pancreatic and kidney, have seen little to no progress. Additional funding is needed to spur research into early detection, treatment and cure of these cancers.
- ★ Cancer disproportionately affects minority populations and people living in areas of low socioeconomic status. For example, African Americans are more likely to develop cancer than people in any other racial or ethnic group; African Americans have higher than average colorectal cancer death rates than other racial or ethnic groups; and Hispanic women have a higher incidence rate for cervical cancer than all other women.
- ★ Screening for colorectal cancer can reduce mortality by 30% or more. However, according to CDC data, screening remains underutilized. More must be done to increase awareness of colorectal cancer and to encourage people at risk to be screened.

REMEMBER:

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU CAN DO IS SHARE WITH
YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS YOUR PERSONAL STORY OF HOW
YOU'VE BEEN TOUCHED BY CANCER.**

THIS CONVEYS MORE THAN ANY SET OF FACTS & FIGURES!!