New Think Tank of Leading Cancer Organizations to Chart the Future of Cancer Disparities Research

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ALEXANDRIA, Va. — A new partnership of leading national cancer organizations met this week to discuss the current state of cancer health disparities research. The American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), the American Cancer Society (ACS), the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) initiated this first-ever collaboration to guide future research that better addresses the disparities in healthcare access and outcomes that exist within many populations.

Some racial and ethnic minorities in the United States are more likely to develop cancer, less likely to access high-quality cancer care, and more likely to die from cancer when compared to others and to whites. The death rate for cancer among African American males, for example, is 33 percent higher than among white males, and for African American females, it is 16 percent higher than among white females.[i]

“We have made great progress in documenting disparities in cancer, however, we still face significant challenges in reducing their impact on outcomes,” said ASCO President Clifford A. Hudis, MD, FACP. “We must move from describing the problems to more quickly identifying and implementing solutions to address the racial and economic-based disparities that continue to affect many cancer patients and families in the United States. ASCO is honored to participate in this unique partnership that will ultimately help bring higher quality cancer care to all individuals.”

Disparities also affect individuals of low socioeconomic status, particularly uninsured individuals. Even with the expansion in coverage resulting from the Affordable Care Act, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that 30 million individuals will still be uninsured in 2019, making accessing quality cancer care difficult for many.[ii]
“Closing the inequality gap will not happen easily, and won’t get done if any of us goes it alone,” said American Cancer Society Chief Medical Officer Otis W. Brawley, MD. “It will require a serious commitment, and we’re proud to join our colleagues to work together to make sure all Americans benefit from the lifesaving progress against cancer.” Joining the Society in support of the effort is its nonpartisan advocacy affiliate, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN).

This week’s meeting brought together experts in clinical cancer research, epidemiology, public health, and healthcare policy, as well as patient advocates to review the state of the science, to discuss needs and priorities in cancer disparities research, and come to consensus on key recommendations. These recommendations will be used to inform the development of a joint AACR/ACS/ASCO/NCI statement that will describe the current state of cancer health disparities research and identify top research needs with a particular emphasis on funding priorities.

“Cancer mortality rates are decreasing for most minorities, but absolute death rates continue to be higher,” said NCI Deputy Director Doug Lowy, MD. “It is important to understand the sources of these disparities and to study ways to reduce them. We are enthusiastic about the new partnership with ACS, AACR and ASCO, and in pursuing its goals.”

This groundbreaking initiative will build on current research findings and provide a model for cooperation among various research groups. The participating organizations hope to reach a diverse audience, including governmental and non-governmental funders and all members of the cancer community.

“Even though great strides have been made in cancer prevention and treatment, more than 1.6 million Americans will be diagnosed with this terrible disease this year, and a disproportionately high burden of cancer will fall on racial and ethnic minorities, low-income and elderly populations, and the medically underserved,” said AACR Chief Executive Officer Margaret Foti, PhD, MD. “The AACR is committed to eliminating cancer health disparities through all means possible. The organization is, therefore, privileged to join this unprecedented collaboration to develop a strategy to promote cooperation among investigators in all areas of the cancer disparities research community to make sure that cancer research counts for all patients, regardless of their race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic status, or the communities in which they live.”

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**About ASCO:**
About the American Society of Clinical Oncology

Founded in 1964, the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) is the world’s leading professional organization representing physicians who care for people with cancer. With more than 35,000 members, ASCO is committed to improving cancer care through scientific meetings, educational programs and peer-reviewed journals. ASCO is supported by its affiliate organization, the Conquer Cancer Foundation, which funds groundbreaking research and programs that make a tangible difference in the lives of people with cancer. For ASCO information and resources, visit asco.org. Patient-oriented cancer information is available at Cancer.Net.

About the American Association for Cancer Research

Founded in 1907, the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) is the world’s oldest and largest professional organization dedicated to advancing cancer research and its mission to prevent and cure cancer. AACR membership includes more than 34,000 laboratory, translational, and clinical researchers; population scientists; other health care professionals; and cancer advocates residing in more than 90 countries. The AACR marshals the full spectrum of expertise of the cancer community to accelerate progress in the prevention, biology, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer by annually convening more than 20 conferences and educational workshops, the largest of which is the AACR Annual Meeting with more than 18,000 attendees. In addition, the AACR publishes eight peer-reviewed scientific journals and a magazine for cancer survivors, patients, and their caregivers. The AACR funds meritorious research directly as well as in cooperation with numerous cancer organizations. As the scientific partner of Stand Up To Cancer, the AACR provides expert peer review, grants administration, and scientific oversight of team science and individual grants in cancer research that have the potential for near-term patient benefit. The AACR actively communicates with legislators and policymakers about the value of cancer research and related biomedical science in saving lives from cancer. For more information about the AACR, visit www.AACR.org. Follow the AACR on Twitter: @AACR. Follow the AACR on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/aacr.org
About the National Cancer Institute

NCI leads the National Cancer Program and the NIH effort to dramatically reduce the prevalence of cancer and improve the lives of cancer patients and their families, through research into prevention and cancer biology, the development of new interventions, and the training and mentoring of new researchers. For more information about cancer, please visit the NCI website at http://www.cancer.gov or call NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237).

About the American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society is a global grassroots force of more than three million volunteers saving lives and fighting for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. As the largest voluntary health organization, the Society’s efforts have contributed to a 20 percent decline in cancer death rates in the U.S. since 1991, and a 50 percent drop in smoking rates. Thanks in part to our progress nearly 14 million Americans who have had cancer and countless more who have avoided it will celebrate more birthdays this year. As we mark our 100th birthday in 2013, we're determined to finish the fight against cancer. We're finding cures as the nation's largest private, not-for-profit investor in cancer research, ensuring people facing cancer have the help they need and continuing the fight for access to quality health care, lifesaving screenings, clean air, and more. For more information, to get help, or to join the fight, call us anytime, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit www.cancer.org/fight.

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