Statement from American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) President Monica M. Bertagnolli, MD, FACS, FASCO, on the American Cancer Society Cancer Facts and Figures 2019 Report

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“This year’s Facts and Figures report provides both encouraging and concerning news on the delivery and impact of cancer care across the United States. Although we continue to see a significant decline in the overall cancer death rate, the report also reveals that not all patients obtain the benefits of contemporary cancer treatment and significant disparities exist based on socio-economic status.

“We have made stunning progress against cancer and the 27% decline in the overall death rate over the last 25 years is a testament to that success. Advances in treating and detecting the disease, as well as a reduction in tobacco use, have led to this sustained drop in cancer mortality, particularly for lung cancer. Of concern however, is the rising incidence of deaths due to obesity-related cancers. Continued investment in federally-sponsored research is essential to accelerate progress in improving cancer treatment and eliminating disparities in cancer outcomes.

“Unfortunately, too many patients can’t access high quality cancer care or contribute to
research that increases our understanding of the disease. The findings in this report reflect the sad truth that where a patient lives often dictates their chances of surviving cancer for a wide range of reasons. For example, ASCO's 2018 National Cancer Opinion Survey found that rural patients typically spend 50 minutes traveling one way to see their cancer doctor compared to 30 minutes for non-rural patients. This extra hardship is compounded in poorer counties where something as simple as a full gas tank can make the difference in a person's ability to get the care they need.

“This report also highlights our long-standing concerns about the underrepresentation of individuals from lower socioeconomic populations in cancer clinical trials and the access to treatment advances these trials may provide. We must work to ensure every patient has access to cancer care that reflects their individual needs as well as the opportunity to participate in research and contribute to progress.

“ASCO commends the American Cancer Society for annually monitoring cancer incidence, mortality, and trends in the United States. We will continue our efforts towards furthering the progress we have made in treating cancer and eliminating disparities in care.”

About ASCO:

Founded in 1964, the American Society of Clinical Oncology, Inc. (ASCO®) is committed to making a world of difference in cancer care. As the world’s leading organization of its kind, ASCO represents nearly 45,000 oncology professionals who care for people living with cancer. Through research, education, and promotion of the highest-quality patient care, ASCO works to conquer cancer and create a world where cancer is prevented or cured, and every survivor is healthy. ASCO is supported by its affiliate organization, the Conquer Cancer Foundation. Learn more at www.ASCO.org, explore patient education resources at www.Cancer.Net, and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube.