World Cancer Day: A Call to Action

Statement by ASCO President Clifford A. Hudis, MD, FACP
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This week, on the eve of World Cancer Day, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) published a report estimating that 14 million new cancer cases occurred worldwide in 2012 and that annual cases will rise to 22 million within two decades. ASCO issued the following statement:

“This year’s World Cancer Day focused on dispelling myths – and perhaps the greatest myth is to think there is nothing we can do about the growing number of people affected by cancer worldwide.”

“Progress in cancer treatment has already prolonged and improved countless lives. Our parallel tasks are to ensure that everyone can benefit from these advances, no matter who they are or where they live, while continuing to accelerate the pace of progress. Given the growing global burden of these diseases, it is simply unacceptable that millions of people in developing countries still go without even the most basic forms of cancer prevention and care. Their suffering is unnecessary and avoidable.”

“As we increase the efficacy of treatment, we also need to deepen the global commitment to cancer prevention. Decades of research have shown that cutting tobacco use is the single most powerful way to prevent many deadly cancers, especially in developing countries where smoking is most widespread. Tackling obesity, a key modifiable risk factor for many cancers, is another top prevention priority. In the United States, one in three cancer deaths is related to obesity, poor nutrition or physical inactivity, and the problem will only increase as more countries and regions adopt the diet and lifestyles of more economically developed economies.”
“We can take action, in part by making healthier choices in our own lives and helping our patients and their families do the same. But we also need to hold national and global leaders accountable for curbing tobacco use and encouraging and ensuring access to cancer treatment and prevention resources for everyone in need.”

Additional Resources:

- ASCO’s Efforts to Improve Cancer Care Worldwide
- CancerProgress.Net: ASCO’s Website Celebrating 50 Years of Modern Oncology

About ASCO:

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.