American Cancer Society

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In 1913, 10 physicians and five laypeople founded the American Society for the Control of Cancer. Its stated purpose was to disseminate knowledge about cancer symptoms, treatment, and prevention; to investigate conditions under which cancer was found; and to compile cancer statistics. Later renamed the American Cancer Society, Inc. (ACS), the organization has grown to 13 division offices, more than 3,000 community offices, and more than 2 million volunteers working to conquer cancer. The mission of the ACS is to "...be the nationwide community-based voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives, and diminishing suffering from cancer, through research, education, advocacy, and service."

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The ACS is fortunate to have many strong partners equally committed to eliminating cancer as a major health problem. For several decades, the ACS has enjoyed a collaborative relationship with ASCO in the support of research aimed at improving the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of cancer; the development of programs to prevent, detect, and treat cancer; the advancement of public policies to provide access to high quality care for all patients with cancer; and the education of physicians and other professionals in the care of patients with cancer. The ACS and community also benefit from the involvement of ASCO members as volunteers at the local level. Whether through direct service such as training of oncologists and patient care or by providing leadership to lay ACS volunteers, ASCO members through their voluntarism have made a huge and much-appreciated contribution to the work of the ACS.

The ACS continues to enjoy wide support for its efforts from the public. Despite the tragedies of the December 2004 tsunami and 2005's Hurricane Katrina, financial contributions for fiscal year 2005 rose nearly 10%. These recent events understandably could have directed public support elsewhere, but our experience shows that public concern and commitment to fighting cancer remain strong.

The impact the ACS and its volunteers make is through research programs and collaborative partnerships, from the legislative process to information dissemination, and community interventions. The Society's advocacy and public policy efforts help ensure that lawmakers at every level of

government understand scientific evidence and adopt policies, laws, and regulations that will help win the fight against cancer. Research is the key to providing evidence for cancer care and public policy decision makers.

The ACS's comprehensive research program has three main components: extramural grants that fund basic and applied researchers at universities, research institutes, and cancer centers throughout the United States; intramural epidemiology and surveillance research; and behavioral research. ACS is the largest source of private, nonprofit cancer research funds in the United States, having invested more than \$2.7 billion and supported the early careers of 38 Nobel Prize winners.

The work of ACS-supported research, both intramural and extramural, has led to significant progress in the control of cancer. One of the most important weapons the ACS has in the fight against cancer is its prevention and early detection guidelines. The ACS currently offers prevention, screening, and early detection recommendations for cancers of the breast, cervix, colon and rectum, prostate, and endometrium, as well as guidance regarding testing for lung cancer and general recommendations for healthy diets and physical activity.

All of the ACS's programs are enhanced by the wealth of information available to patients and their caregivers. Providing the public with up-to-date, reliable cancer information anytime, day or night, is a priority for the ACS. The National Cancer Information Center, which houses trained specialists and oncology nurses, is available via a toll-free call to 800-ACS-2345, 24 hours a day, every day. At www.cancer.org, visitors can find the latest cancer news and links to community resources and events, and can download more than 100 patient education books and pamphlets. An online community of fellow patients, survivors, and caregivers who understand and inspire is available through the Cancer Survivors Network. The ACS also publishes three professional journals, *Cancer*, *Cancer Cytopathology*, and *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*.

Relay for Life, the ACS's premier fundraising event involving more than 3 million volunteers, serves as one of its most important means for informing the public about cancer. Relay events are moving and allow cancer survivors to come together to celebrate their triumphs and family and friends to remember loved ones.

If our past is any guide, the ACS and ASCO can look forward to a future when cancer is prevented, suffering is eliminated, and lives are saved.

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