

# American Cancer Society and IBM Collaborate to Create Virtual Cancer Health Advisor

## Initiative aims to provide cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers with trusted ACS resources and guidance

ATLANTA -- IBM and the American Cancer Society today announced a partnership to create the first advisor for people fighting cancer, powered by Watson cognitive computing. The initiative, announced at the 13th Annual World Health Care Congress, aims to provide cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers with trusted ACS resources and guidance personalized to an individual's unique journey against cancer.

More than 1.6 million Americans are diagnosed with cancer each year, and the challenge of finding the right information for each person to manage their disease often presents yet another hurdle. Filtering countless health websites for relevant, accurate and trustworthy information is daunting, and even more difficult to draw insights from multiple sources. This is where Watson may help.

Once developed, the advisor will anticipate the needs of people with different types of cancers, at different stages of disease, and at various points in treatment. It will be dynamic and become increasingly personalized as individuals engage with it, effectively getting 'smarter' each time it is used. ACS and IBM also envision incorporating Watson's voice recognition and natural language processing technology, enabling users to ask questions and receive audible responses.

For example, a person with breast cancer experiencing unusual levels of pain could ask what might be causing pain. The advisor would be designed to respond with information on symptoms and self-management options associated with that person's current and future phases of treatment, based on the experiences of people with similar characteristics. Because the advisor learns from each engagement, a person would receive customized options based on preferences that Watson has learned, such as a person who prefers online peer support groups to telephonic health coach calls.

ACS and IBM will create this robust resource by drawing upon massive sources of data from both organizations, then train Watson to use the data to understand and anticipate individuals' needs. The advisor will use ACS's cancer.org 14,000 pages of detailed information on more than 70 cancer topics, as well as healthy lifestyles, risk reduction, and early detection. Watson will also 'ingest' the ACS National Cancer Information Center's de-identified and aggregated data about self-management, support groups, health/wellness activities, and cancer education. The offering is expected to surface insights from IBM's Watson Health Cloud -- one of the world's largest and most diverse collections of non-governmental health-related data in a secure, cloud-based and HIPAA-enabled environment.

'We help patients every day who seek information and insights to understand the disease and navigate their cancer journey,' said Gary M. Reedy, CEO of the American Cancer Society. 'This partnership can take these efforts to next level by combining the depth and breadth of cancer information from the world's most trusted cancer source with the power of cognitive technology from IBM Watson. It's about providing the right information to the right people at the right time.'

Longer term, ACS and IBM aim to integrate the advisor with IBM's existing Watson for Oncology offering for doctors. Watson for Oncology is a clinical decision support tool that helps doctors make personalized, evidence-based treatment decisions for their patients. By integrating the ACS advisor, clinicians could be prompted to share personalized guidance on resources, including educational materials and social services and programs such as ACS's Road to Recovery transportation, Hope Lodge housing, and Look Good Feel Better.

'IBM is honored to partner with the American Cancer Society and to apply Watson to help the Society deliver tailored education, support and services to the millions of people impacted by this

disease,' said Kyu Rhee, MD, MPP, chief health officer, IBM Watson Health. 'In doing so, we expand IBM's existing commitment to tackling cancer, enhance Watson's already formidable expertise in this domain, and support the American Cancer Society in its work to save and improve lives worldwide.'

IBM is working with researchers, clinicians, and cancer institutions to apply Watson technology to the data challenges of cancer treatment through partnerships with Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and MD Anderson Cancer Center. At Mayo Clinic, Watson is helping doctors match patients to relevant clinical trials, and 16 leading cancer institutes are working with Watson to help doctors translate DNA insights into personalized treatment options for patients. Researchers from Baylor College of Medicine are using Watson to develop solutions for automated hypothesis generation.

### **About the American Cancer Society**

The American Cancer Society is a global grassroots force of 2.5 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 22 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, 14.5 million Americans who have had cancer and countless more who have avoided it will celebrate more birthdays this year. 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 (800) 227-2345 or visit [cancer.org](http://cancer.org).

### **About IBM Watson Health**

Watson is the first commercially available cognitive computing capability representing a new era in computing. The system, delivered through the cloud, analyzes high volumes of data, understands complex questions posed in natural language, and proposes evidence-based answers. Watson continuously learns, gaining in value and knowledge over time, from previous interactions. In April 2015, the company launched IBM Watson Health and the Watson Health Cloud platform. The new unit will help improve the ability of doctors, researchers and insurers to innovate by surfacing insights from the massive amount of personal health data being created and shared daily. The Watson Health Cloud will allow this information to be de-identified, shared and combined with a dynamic and constantly growing aggregated view of clinical, research and social health data. For more information on IBM Watson, visit: [ibm.com/watson](http://ibm.com/watson). For more information on IBM Watson Health, visit: [ibm.com/watsonhealth](http://ibm.com/watsonhealth). Check out the IBM Watson press kit at: <http://www-03.ibm.com/press/us/en/presskit/27297.wss>. Join the conversation at #ibmwatson and #watsonhealth. Follow Watson on Facebook and see Watson on YouTube and Flickr.

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