Dr. Stephen Klasko and Colleen Wyse to Fund a New American Cancer Society Research Program to Improve Access to Quality Care

ATLANTA, March 20, 2023 – Sophisticated technologies are driving progress against cancer, but many people across the United States are not benefiting from these innovations. To help ensure equitable access to quality care, the American Cancer Society (ACS) and Dr. Stephen Klasko and his wife, Colleen Wyse, lifelong advocates for transformation in healthcare, will partner to launch a new research grant program, the Advancing Health Equity and Addressing Cancer Disparities (AHEAD) Awards.

The AHEAD Awards will fund exploratory, novel research studies that seek to improve access to quality cancer screenings and cancer care by bringing technologies to individuals, rather than requiring those individuals to travel to health care facilities.

“Across the country, certain groups carry higher cancer risks heightened by lower incomes, poor insurance coverage, fewer community health resources, and geographic isolation from in-person health care,” said Dr. Karen E. Knudsen, CEO of ACS. “All of these factors can impede timely cancer screenings and surveillance, interfere with provider communications, and complicate access to cancer treatment. We are so grateful to Dr. Klasko and Colleen for their support in these critical efforts to reduce cancer disparities.”

In this initial year, ACS seeks to raise $3 million to provide grant funds to up to 10 investigators. The proposals submitted by researchers will undergo ACS’s rigorous peer-review process with analysis by 20-25 experts in the fields of cancer prevention, screening, health promotion, cancer treatment and other topics pertinent to translating discoveries into remote cancer care.

"The American Cancer Society gets it. It is time to move population health, social determinants, and health gaps from philosophy to action and the mainstream of clinical care, research and payment models," said Klasko. “The AHEAD program is a major step forward in democratizing cancer research and delivery, and Colleen and I are thrilled to support the organization’s mission and work to reduce inequities in cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment. We hope our gift will inspire other philanthropists, foundations and corporations to join them.”

Klasko and Wyse, made a $500,000 commitment to support one AHEAD Award and ACS BrightEdge, the innovation and impact venture capital arm of ACS, to accelerate product commercialization and invest in emerging startup companies. The AHEAD awards are a key strategy to bring cancer innovations to those who need resources the most, and BrightEdge fulfills a critical role in the bench-to-bedside cancer innovation pipeline by bridging the innovation and funding gaps to end cancer for all.

More information about the AHEAD Awards can be found here.

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About the American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society is a leading cancer-fighting organization with a vision to end cancer as we know it, for everyone. For more than 100 years, we have been improving the lives of people with cancer and their families as the only organization combating cancer through advocacy, research, and patient support. We are committed to ensuring everyone has an opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer. To learn more, visit cancer.org or call our 24/7 helpline at 1-800-227-2345. Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

About BrightEdge

BrightEdge is the American Cancer Society's donor-funded innovation and impact investment arm that invests in for-profit companies developing therapeutics, diagnostics, medical devices, and technologies to eradicate cancer. It invests alongside top-tier life sciences and healthcare investors with a goal of generating financial returns and patient impact. For more information and a copy of the fund's 2021 report, visit acsbrightedge.org.

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