

American Cancer Society and ACS CAN Statement on National Cancer Institute Director Stepping Down

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WASHINGTON, D.C.—April 4, 2022—National Cancer Institute (NCI) director, Dr. Ned Sharpless, has announced he intends to leave his post at NCI at the end of April. Dr. Sharpless has led the Institute for five years during which time he proved to be a tireless advocate for increased investment in cancer research.

Sharpless also served as interim director of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2019, an agency that plays a critical role in regulating tobacco and advancing cancer drug therapies.

Prior to becoming NCI director, Dr. Sharpless served as director at UNC's Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center and has a long-established career as a leading scientist in cancer research.

A statement from Dr. Karen E. Knudsen, Chief Executive Officer of the American Cancer Society (ACS) and the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) follows:

"On behalf of ACS and ACS CAN I would like to extend my most sincere gratitude to Dr. Sharpless for his leadership and steady hand at the helm of the National Cancer Institute during such an important time in cancer research. He has always been an advocate for the most impactful science across the cancer continuum. Dr. Sharpless championed the importance of fundamental cancer research, as well as population-focused and clinical research, understanding that all three will be necessary to work together in order to significantly reduce the burden of cancer.

"We at ACS and ACS CAN have always appreciated the strong relationship and partnership with the National Cancer Institute in aligning priorities around research that is intended to improve the lives of cancer patients and their families.

"Throughout his tenure at NCI, Dr. Sharpless has eagerly and enthusiastically partnered with patient advocates; seeking input and providing feedback in a manner that has served to strengthen the Institute and accelerate progress. His strong presence and collaborative approach have proven pivotal in securing significant funding increases for NCI—from \$5.7 billion to \$6.9 billion—which will help develop new preventive, diagnostic, and curative treatments in years to come.

"Dr. Sharpless came to NCI with a unique perspective, having led one of the nation's major cancer centers. He understood acutely where the gaps were in funding cancer research, as well the importance of getting access to patients for the latest breakthroughs. That perspective is one of the things that made him such an exceptional NCI director.

"Prior to joining NCI, his research on mitigating the toxic effects of chemotherapy and advance targeted treatments through the use of biomarker testing characterizes his personal commitment to reducing the devastating effects of the more than 200 diseases we call cancer. He has

significant experience bringing fundamental discoveries all the way through translation into the clinic, and he is an exceptional translational scientist and physician.

“Dr. Sharpless’ leadership will be missed at NCI, but his legacy at the Institute will continue to benefit cancer patients and their care for years to come.

“We look forward to working with the next NCI director to continue the essential research necessary to save more lives from cancer.”


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About the American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society is on a mission to free the world from cancer. We invest in lifesaving research, provide 24/7 information and support, and work to ensure that individuals in every community have access to cancer prevention, detection, and treatment. For more information, visit cancer.org.

About ACS CAN at 20

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) makes cancer a top priority for policymakers at every level of government. ACS CAN empowers volunteers across the country to make their voices heard to influence evidence-based public policy change that saves lives. We believe everyone should have a fair and just opportunity to prevent, find, treat, and survive cancer. Since 2001, as the American Cancer Society’s nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate, ACS CAN has successfully advocated for billions of dollars in cancer research funding, expanded access to quality affordable health care, and made workplaces, including restaurants and bars, smoke-free. As we mark our 20th anniversary, we’re more determined than ever to stand together with our volunteers and save more lives from cancer. Join the fight by visiting www.fightcancer.org.

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