American Cancer Society Launches Return to Screening Initiative with Support from Genentech

Nationwide Effort Aims to Increase Breast, Cervical, Colorectal, and Lung Cancer Screening Rates

The American Cancer Society (ACS) is kicking off a nationwide Return to Screening initiative to encourage patients to resume appropriate cancer screening and follow up care.

With the support of the campaign's founding sponsor, Genentech, a member of the Roche Group, ACS will lead a comprehensive and multi-sector national movement to dramatically and swiftly increase cancer screening rates to pre-pandemic levels. This will include convening a national consortium of public health groups, professional organizations, patient advocacy groups, existing roundtables, businesses, government, and key individual leaders to improve screening rates for breast, cervical, colorectal, and lung cancers. The first meeting of the national consortium will be held on March 18, 2021.

The Return to Screening initiative will also support the development of regional and local consortia, materials for health care systems to utilize in improving screening rates, and state-based interventions to improve health equity in under-resourced communities. Pandemic-related disruptions have already exacerbated existing disparities in cancer screening and are likely to impact survival across groups of people who have systemically experienced social or economic obstacles to screening and care.

"We're at a unique moment in history in the fight against cancer. What we do right now to combat the staggering declines in cancer screening rates that we've seen since the start of the pandemic will have reverberations for decades to come," said William G. Cance, MD, chief medical officer of the American Cancer Society. "To successfully meet, and even exceed, pre-pandemic screening rates will take a coordinated, multi-sector approach. We are so grateful to our partners, including our founding sponsor Genentech, for collaborating on an initiative that's big enough and bold enough to return people to screening."

"We recognized very quickly that one of the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis was fewer people were getting screened for cancer, which can lead to delays in diagnosis, treatment and, ultimately, a higher likelihood of disease progression and even death," said Craig Eagle, MD, Vice President of U.S. Medical Affairs Oncology at Genentech. "To address this growing health crisis, we are proud to partner with the American Cancer Society to support this critical initiative and encourage people to return to screening."

Due to delays in screening for breast, cervical, colorectal, and lung cancers, many cancers could be going undiagnosed and untreated and may advance to later stages, which become harder to treat. ACS foresees that the pandemic-related reductions in health care access and cancer screening will result in a short-term drop in cancer diagnoses and a later corresponding increase in late-state diagnoses and potentially preventable deaths.

With the support of Genentech, the American Cancer Society plans to formally launch the Return to Screening public education campaign later this year. For more information about cancer screening, please visit cancer.org.