Merck Foundation Awards Grant to American Cancer Society for Program to Improve Access to High-Quality Cancer Care in Underserved Communities

$1.58 Million Grant Supports Patient Navigation Program, Empowering Patients and Caregivers with Information and Support

March 24, 2016 – The Merck Foundation (the Foundation) and the American Cancer Society announced today that the Foundation provided a grant of $1.58 million over four years to the Society to implement a comprehensive Patient Navigation Program in three U.S. communities where substantial cancer care disparities exist. This funding will allow the ACS to enhance its already substantial Patient Navigation Program and expand its focus on access to high-quality care, patient empowerment and care coordination.

Sites selected to participate in the community-based program include the Queens Hospital Center in Queens, N.Y.; the Phoenix Cancer Center/Maricopa Integrated Health System in Phoenix; and the University of New Mexico Cancer Center in Albuquerque, N.M. The organizations were selected because they provide services to diverse, low-income and often underserved patient populations.

“For 125 years, Merck has focused on finding solutions to improve care for patients facing devastating diseases like cancer,” said Brenda D. Colatrella, president, Merck Foundation and executive director, Corporate Responsibility, Merck. “Receiving a cancer diagnosis can be an overwhelming experience, and we are proud to work with the American Cancer Society to help empower those touched by cancer to navigate the often complicated path to finding the best care available.”

“Many people don’t know how to access the health care system. They don’t have insurance, they’re afraid or they have personal beliefs that lead them to ignore their health and avoid the health care system altogether,” said Katherine Sharpe, senior vice president, Patient and Caregiver Support, American Cancer Society. “The Patient Navigation Program addresses these issues and helps people get the care they need even under very difficult cultural, economic, educational and financial circumstances. At the heart of patient navigation is the lesson that offering an ear to listen and a hand to help can have remarkable impact on the health of those most in need. We are grateful to the Merck Foundation for providing this grant to bring much-needed support to cancer patients in vulnerable communities in Arizona, New Mexico and New York.”

The Patient Navigation Program is a proactive approach to providing guidance and support for cancer patients, their families and caregivers. Currently, more than 100 Patient Navigators are working in hospitals and cancer treatment centers nationwide. They help with identifying and reducing barriers to treatment, such as challenges with language, transportation and health insurance. In 2015, the Patient Navigation Program provided services to more than 44,000 patients across the nation, more than one-third of whom were covered by Medicaid or were uninsured.

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.

About The Merck Foundation

The Merck Foundation is a U.S.-based, private charitable foundation. Established in 1957 by Merck, a global health care leader, the Foundation is funded entirely by the company and is Merck's chief source of funding support to qualified non-profit, charitable organizations. Since its inception, the Merck Foundation has contributed more than $819 million to support important initiatives that address societal needs and are consistent with Merck's overall mission to help the world be well. For more information, visit www.merckgiving.com.