

American Cancer Society Awards over \$8.5 Million in Grants towards Research Aimed at Eliminating Cancer Disparities

April 15-21 is National Minority Cancer Awareness Week

ATLANTA – April 11, 2012 – The American Cancer Society, the largest non-government, not-for-profit funding source of cancer research and training in the United States, has awarded twelve national research grants totaling more than \$8.5 million to support research aimed at achieving health equity. These grants will support research around the impact of the health care system and patient navigators in reducing barriers to care; help educate Latina breast cancer survivors about post-treatment screening; assist in reducing disparities in liver cancer treatment; and support interventions to help low income smokers quit. The grants are among 135 research and training grants totaling about \$52 million in the first of two grant cycles for 2012.

During the past ten years, the Society has dedicated a portion of its extramural research funding towards studies of cancer in poor and medically underserved populations. During that time, the program awarded 133 grants worth more than \$113.5 million. Building on those ten years of targeted funding for research in poor and underserved populations, the Society's Extramural Grants program recently began a program of priority funding for psychosocial, behavioral, health policy, and health services research that will result in reductions in cancer health disparities.

"In order to achieve health equity in the U.S., it is important that we explore ways to better understand how cancer affects different populations," said Otis W. Brawley, MD, chief medical officer for the American Cancer Society. "We realize the critical need to support research geared towards closing the disparities gap, and good research can help us discover ways to do so effectively."

Highlights from some of the newly-awarded grants, which go into effect beginning July 1, 2012, are below.

Karen Freund, MD, MPH, of Tufts University School of Medicine, has received one of the Society's most prestigious grants – a Clinical Research Professor award. Dr. Freund's research program has three goals: to understand the impact of the health care system on disparities in cancer outcomes for vulnerable populations; to determine how patient navigator programs help reduce barriers to care in vulnerable populations; and to understand the role of health insurance reform in reducing health disparities.

Hayley Thompson, PhD, of Wayne State University has received a grant to support her research to address the issue that Latina breast cancer survivors are less likely to receive recommended post-treatment screening for recurrences or new breast cancers. She will test whether a DVD that provides key information about breast cancer surveillance and recurrence, including the perspective of a Latina breast cancer survivor, can increase the likelihood that Latina survivors will get screened for breast cancer.

Curtis Wray, MD, of University of Texas Medical School at Houston proposes a model to reduce disparities in liver cancer treatment and outcomes for poor and medically underserved patients.

This project will produce guidelines to assist patients and providers in making informed decisions about appropriate liver cancer treatments, including palliative care, particularly when the disease is in an advanced stage.

Michael Businelle, PhD, of MD Anderson Cancer Center, will study the factors that make it less likely that Spanish-speaking Mexican American smokers of low socioeconomic status (SES) will successfully quit. His study will use smart phones to identify real time situations that may promote relapse in Spanish-speaking Mexican Americans, in comparison to Caucasians, African Americans, and other Latinos. Dr. Businelle's eventual goal is to develop smart phone interventions tailored to assist low SES smokers with their specific tobacco cessation challenges.

The American Cancer Society combines an unyielding passion with nearly a century of experience to save lives and end suffering from cancer. As a global grassroots force of more than three million volunteers, we fight for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. We save lives by helping people stay well by preventing cancer or detecting it early; helping people get well by being there for them during and after a cancer diagnosis; by finding cures through investment in groundbreaking discovery; and by fighting back by rallying lawmakers to pass laws to defeat cancer and by rallying communities worldwide to join the fight. As the nation's largest non-governmental investor in cancer research, contributing more than \$3.5 billion, we turn what we know about cancer into what we do. As a result, about 11 million people in America who have had cancer and countless more who have avoided it will be celebrating birthdays this year. To learn more about us or to get help, call us any time, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit cancer.org.
