American Cancer Society Awarded $3.5 Million from MSD Foundation to Advance Work in Global Cancer Patient Navigation

ATLANTA, February 27, 2025 — The American Cancer Society (ACS), has launched a new initiative – SPARK (Supporting Patient Navigation, Adoption, Replication and Knowledge-exchange) – to strengthen and enhance patient navigation and improve care for people living with cancer in Indonesia, Kenya, and Nigeria. This initiative is supported by a six-year $3.5 million commitment in grant funding from the MSD Foundation, a private charitable organization funded by Merck & Co., Inc., Rahway, NJ USA (known as MSD outside the United States and Canada).

SPARK builds on and extends ACS' groundbreaking work to develop cancer patient navigation in low-and-middle-income countries (LMICs) through the ACS BEACON (Building Expertise, Advocacy and Capacity for Oncology Navigation) Initiative. Participating health institutions and cancer organizations navigated more than 152,000 patients globally in 2024. While the BEACON Initiative supports efforts to pioneer patient navigation at the country level, SPARK will build the capacity of multiple health facilities and cancer organizations in national cancer care delivery systems in Indonesia, Kenya, and Nigeria to enhance access to care for more patients throughout each country.

"The global burden of cancer is expected to almost double in the next three decades, with the largest burden of increased cancer incidence and mortality in countries with lower resources. With a scale-up of cancer services in these settings, we have an opportunity to positively change these outcomes," said Dr. Arif Kamal, chief patient officer at the American Cancer Society. "Patient navigation is a proven, effective method to increase equitable access to cancer care in the United States, and we at the American Cancer Society have a rich history of translating domestic lessons learned to other countries. We are excited to expand this collaborative work so more patients across the globe can access high-quality care through navigation."

According to ACS's 2024 Global Cancer Facts & Figures, an estimated 20 million cancer cases were newly diagnosed and 9.7 million people died from their disease worldwide in 2022. By 2050, the number of new cancer cases is predicted to reach 35 million. Seventy percent of these deaths are in LMICs, primarily due to lack of or inadequate early detection and treatment services. For example, the breast cancer mortality rate is twice as high in Nigeria as in the United States (27 versus 12 per 100,000) despite a 48% lower incidence rate (52 versus 100 per 100,000).

"In a country as vast as Indonesia, where access to care is a challenge along with other complex barriers to care, we must bring patient-centered solutions closer to patients needing them most. SPARK provides us with an opportunity to expand patient navigation partnerships between regional hospitals and local cancer organizations to ensure that every patient receives timely and effective diagnosis and treatment," said Dr. Soehartati A. Gondhowiardjo: Cipto Mangunkusumo National Referral Hospital, Indonesia.

With support from the MSD Foundation, SPARK will apply the capacity development resources and efforts of the BEACON Initiative to develop a robust network of patient navigation programs at the sub-national level. SPARK will promote a groundswell of interest and awareness in patient navigation by building the capacity of local cancer organizations and health facility partners, promoting connections and collaborative efforts, and guiding governmental policy efforts in each country to prioritize and sustain patient navigation as essential for equitable and accessible high-quality patient care.

"Strong collaborators and innovative solutions are needed to improve cancer care. The MSD Foundation is proud to support the American Cancer Society in their efforts to advance patient navigation, ensuring more individuals in underserved communities receive the vital assistance they need on their cancer journey," said Kalahn Taylor-Clark, vice president and head of Social Impact and Sustainability at MSD.

Learn more about the American Cancer Society's Global cancer work at Global Cancer Care and Patient Support | American Cancer Society.

###

Additional Resources:
Patient Navigation Cancer Care

Early Onset Colorectal Cancer Soar Globally

Prostate Cancer Incidence and Mortality Rates Rising in Many Low- and Middle-Income Countries

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 110 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, X, and Instagram.

Additional assets available online: Photos (1)