Cancer survivorship conference highlights research for survivor care

Biennial conference aims to improve quality and length of life for cancer survivors

More than 400 leading experts in cancer survivorship convened today for a conference, Cancer Survivorship Research: Translating Science to Care, to focus on such current concerns as how obesity might not have the same effects on all cancer survivors, and the substantial and increasing economic burden of cancer survivorship in the United States.

Since 2002, the Biennial Cancer Survivorship Research Conference has brought together investigators and clinicians involved in cancer survivorship research. The conference is jointly sponsored by the American Cancer Society's Behavioral Research Center, the National Cancer Institute's Office of Cancer Survivorship, the Lance Armstrong Foundation, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Obesity continues to be a major public health concern, and the effects of obesity on cancer survivors specifically will be the focus of one session. Population studies will be discussed that demonstrate that obesity might not have the same effects on all survivors, and new animal studies will be presented that are informing behavior change interventions for survivors who need them most.

Experts also will explore resilience, or the ability to cope effectively with stress and adversity. Cancer survivorship research has attempted to document and design interventions to address the physical and psychosocial effects of cancer that can disrupt survivors' health and well-being. This session will highlight recent scientific findings on resilience and growth after cancer and will present a psychosocial program to enhance resilience and well-being among cancer survivors.

The economic burden of cancer survivorship in the United States is substantial and is expected to increase significantly in the future. One session, titled Economic Issues in Cancer Survivorship, will provide an overview of recent research in health care costs, employment patterns, health insurance, and access to health care in cancer survivors. Leading scientists will identify research gaps and potentially modifiable issues for research and policy interventions to improve outcomes for cancer survivors and their families.

This year's conference again includes a survivor advocate program, which provides travel scholarships for 20 advocates to attend the conference, to learn first-hand about key research in cancer survivorship and to interact with other advocate leaders and survivorship researchers. Program participants were selected on the basis of their research advocacy experience, the potential impact conference attendance would have on their future advocacy work, and the strength of their proposed use of tools from the conference for community education.

Visit http://www.cancer.org/subsites/Survivorship2012/survivorship-conference-2012 for more information about the conference.

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