Breaking Barriers in Cancer Care: The American Cancer Society and Pfizer Announce a $15 Million, Three-Year Initiative to Bridge the Gap in Cancer Care Disparities

The initiative, “Change the Odds: Uniting to Improve Cancer Outcomes TM” aims to enhance awareness of and access to cancer screening, clinical trials and support in medically underrepresented communities across the United States

ATLANTA and NEW YORK, February 5, 2024– The American Cancer Society (ACS) and Pfizer today announced the launch of “Change the Odds: Uniting to Improve Cancer Outcomes TM,” a three-year initiative to bridge the gap in cancer care disparities. Through $15 million in funding from Pfizer, the initiative aims to improve health outcomes in medically underrepresented communities across the United States by enhancing awareness of and access to cancer screenings, clinical trial opportunities, and patient support and comprehensive navigation. “Change the Odds” will initially focus on breast and prostate cancer in medically underserved communities, with the potential to expand to additional cancer types. ACS plans to engage additional partners to extend the reach of the programmatic activities to more individuals and deepen the tangible impact in select communities.

“Cancer doesn’t discriminate – and neither should cancer care,” said Chris Boshoff, Chief Oncology Officer and Executive Vice President, Pfizer. “Everyone should have the same opportunity to access the latest advances in care, regardless of their background or where they live. We’re proud to partner with the American Cancer Society on a broad, community-focused initiative to reach people living with cancer where they are, with urgency, and connect them to resources to receive the care they deserve.”

Breast and prostate cancer are the most common types of cancer diagnosed among women and men in the United States, respectively.[i] Incidence for both cancers continues to increase nationwide[ii],[iii] with a greater impact for certain races and ethnicities[iv], which can be more pronounced in urban areas.[v] In addition, people living in rural areas in the United States face barriers to accessing cancer screening and quality care,[vi] leading to higher mortality rates.[vii] Feelings of social isolation experienced by people living with breast or prostate cancer are associated with poorer outcomes[viii],[ix], underscoring a critical need for community-centric approaches that are designed to make a tangible difference in patients’ lives by addressing their whole health needs, tackling seclusion and providing the help they need to ensure timely access to scientific advances in care.

“Our goal of ending cancer as we know it, for everyone, including medically underrepresented communities, can only be attained through strong and actionable partnerships with a shared vision like ours with Pfizer,” said Dr. Karen E. Knudsen, CEO of the American Cancer Society. “Our collaboration will help unlock ACS’ full potential in addressing health disparities with measurable, sustainable and systemic solutions to deliver access to high-quality care and treatments for every individual.”

ACS will leverage its broad network and engage on-the-ground partners to connect individuals and promote awareness of no- and low-cost screening and access to programs and services through culturally sensitive outreach in communities disproportionately impacted by breast and prostate cancer. ACS aims to accelerate access to today’s treatments and tomorrow’s scientific advancements to “Change the Odds” to drive sustainable solutions to help ensure equitable outcomes for all patients.

Through ACS’ extensive evidence-based patient navigation programs, patients will be guided through the complexities of their cancer journey and given information to help them understand and access recommended screening, treatments, community resources, and emotional support. ACS will also work to empower patients and healthcare providers in several medically underrepresented communities with information about clinical trials and address potential barriers to trial participation. Additionally, ACS will work alongside its vast network of Health Equity Ambassadors to deliver trusted cancer prevention and early detection resources and information into each community.

For more information about “Change the Odds” please visit cancer.org/ChangeTheOdds.

Key Statistics:

- According to the latest research from ACS, about 299,000 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2024, with more than 35,000 deaths.[x] The incidence of prostate cancer is about 70% higher in Black men than in White men.[xi] Black men are over two times more likely to die from the disease than White, Hispanic or Asian American/Pacific Islander men.[xi]
- Nearly 311,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, with more than 42,000 deaths. [x]
- Despite having a 4 percent lower incidence of breast cancer, Black women with breast cancer are 40% more likely to die than White women and twice as likely to die if they are younger than the age of 50.[xii] Hispanic women are more likely to be diagnosed with later-staged breast cancer in comparison to White women.[xiii]
- While there has been progress in cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment in the United States, people who are of lower socioeconomic status and living in rural areas have not benefited equitably from these advances. [xiv] In general, survival after a cancer diagnosis is shorter for people of all races who have a lower socioeconomic status and who live in a more rural area than those who do not. [xiv]
- Although cancer can disproportionately impact ethnic/racial groups in both incidence and outcome, racial minorities are less likely to be included in clinical trials.[iv]
- Those living in rural areas often experience transportation challenges and other barriers to clinical trial participation.[vi]

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 100 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, Twitter, and Instagram.

About Pfizer Oncology

At Pfizer Oncology, we are at the forefront of a new era in cancer care. Our industry-leading portfolio and extensive pipeline includes game-changing mechanisms of action to attack cancer from multiple angles, including antibody-drug conjugates (ADCs), small molecules, bispecifics and other immunotherapies. We are focused on delivering transformative therapies in some of the world’s most common cancers, including breast cancer, genitourinary cancer and hematologic malignancies, as well as melanoma, gastrointestinal, gynecological and thoracic cancers, which includes lung cancer. Driven by science, we are committed to accelerating breakthroughs to extend and improve patients’ lives.

Business Wire Release

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[ii] American Cancer Society. https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/breast-cancer/about/how-common-is-breast-cancer.html

[iii] American Cancer Society. https://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/prostate-cancer/about/key-statistics.html

[iv] American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts & Figures for African Americans 2022-2024

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[xiv] American Cancer Society. American Cancer Society's report on the status of cancer disparities in the United States, 2023. https://acsjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.3322/caac.21812

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