New American Cancer Society Report Says 650,000 Cancer Deaths Avoided between 1990 and 2005

ATLANTA 2009/05/27 -The American Cancer Society's annual cancer statistics report finds that 15 years of steady declines in overall cancer death rates translate to about 650,000 deaths from cancer avoided or delayed during that time period. The estimate comes from "Cancer Statistics 2009," published early online and appearing in the July/August print issue of *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*. The report says the overall cancer death rate in men decreased by 19.2 percent between 1990 and 2005, driven largely by decreases in lung, prostate, and colorectal cancers, while it decreased in women by 11.4 percent between 1991 and 2005, driven by decreases in breast and colorectal cancer. The number of avoided deaths increased in the later years as the gap between the rate in 1990-1991 and current mortality rates continued to grow.

The annual Cancer Statistics report and the 58th edition of the consumer-friendly companion report, *Cancer Facts & Figures*, also estimate that there will be 1,479,350 new cancer cases (766,130 in men and 713,220 in women) and 562,340 cancer deaths (292,540 among men and 269,800 among women) in 2009, corresponding to more than 1,500 cancer deaths per day. Lung, prostate, breast, and colon cancers continue to be the most common fatal cancers. These four cancers account for half of the total cancer deaths among men and women. Lung cancer surpassed breast cancer as the leading cause of cancer death in women in 1987, and is expected to account for 26 percent of all female cancer deaths in 2009.

Overall cancer incidence rates also decreased in the most recent time period in both men (1.8 percent per year from 2001 to 2005) and women (0.6 percent per year from 1998 to 2005). These drops in newly diagnosed cancers were largely due to decreases in the three major cancer sites in men—lung, prostate, and colon and rectum [colorectum, commonly referred to as colon cancer]—and in two major cancer sites in women—breast and colorectal cancers.

Among men in 2009, cancers of the prostate, lung, and colon will account for half of all newly diagnosed cancers. Prostate cancer alone will account for about 25 percent (192,280) of cancer cases in men. About nine in ten of these new cases of prostate cancer are expected to be diagnosed at local or regional stages, for which five-year relative survival approaches 100 percent.

The three most commonly diagnosed types of cancer among women in 2009 will be cancers of the breast, lung, and colon, accounting for 51 percent of cancer cases in women. Breast cancer alone is expected to account for 27 percent (192,370) of all new cancer cases among women.

Each year, *Cancer Facts & Figures* features a Special Section highlighting a particular topic related to cancer. The Special Section of Cancer Facts & Figures 2009 is "Multiple Primary Cancers." The purpose of this year's Special Section is to provide information for cancer survivors and health care providers about the burden and risks of subsequent primary cancers. It is estimated that there are now more than 11 million cancer survivors in the U.S., more than three times the number in 1970. Overall, cancer survivors are about 14 percent more likely to develop a new cancer than individuals who have never had a cancer diagnosis; almost 900,000 cancer survivors have been diagnosed with more than one cancer. Patients diagnosed with tobacco-related cancers, such as cancers of the oral cavity, lung, esophagus, kidney, and urinary bladder, have the highest risk for a second cancer because smoking is a risk factor for at least 15 types of cancer. Breast cancer survivors comprise almost half of women who develop a second cancer.

"A drop of one or two percent per year in the cancer mortality rate may sound small, but as this report shows, that adds up to 650,000 cancer deaths avoided over 15 years," said John R. Seffrin, Ph.D., American Cancer Society chief executive officer. "And because the rate continues to drop, it means that in recent years, about 100,000 people each year who would have died if cancer death rates had not declined are living to celebrate another birthday. That is undeniable evidence of the lifesaving progress that we as a country must dedicate ourselves to continuing."

"Cancer Statistics" and *Cancer Facts & Figures* have become critical tools for scientists, public health experts, and policymakers in assessing the current burden of cancer. The estimated numbers of cases and deaths in the

current year are some of the most widely quoted cancer statistics in the world. The American Cancer Society's leading team of epidemiologic researchers, in collaboration with scientists from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), compiles and analyzes incidence data from the National Cancer Institute, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries, and mortality data from NCHS to estimate the number of new cancer cases and deaths for the current year nationwide and in individual states. Estimates of the expected numbers of new cancer cases and cancer deaths should be interpreted with caution, however. These estimates may vary considerably from year to year, particularly for less common cancers and in states with smaller populations. Despite these limitations, the American Cancer Society's estimates of the number of new cancer cases and deaths in the current year provide reasonably accurate estimates of the burden of new cancer cases and deaths in the United States. Such estimates will assist in continuing efforts to reduce the public health burden of cancer.

The full Cancer Statistics article can be viewed after embargo at http://cajournal.org/ and *Cancer Facts & Figures 2009* is available at www.cancer.org/statistics.

About the American Cancer Society

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 about $3.4 billion, we turn what we know about cancer into what we do. As a result, more than 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 anytime, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit cancer.org.

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