The American Cancer Society and LIVESTRONG® Launch First Global Economic Cost of Cancer Report

Landmark report shows that cancer has the greatest economic impact from premature death and disability of all causes of death worldwide

ATLANTA — August 16, 2010 — For the first time, research shows that cancer has the most devastating economic impact of any cause of death in the world - costing the global economy nearly a trillion dollars a year. The American Cancer Society and LIVESTRONG® have joined together to release a first-of-its-kind study on the economic cost of all causes of death globally, including cancer and other noncommunicable and communicable diseases. According to the World Health Organization projections, this year, cancer will become the world's leading cause of death, followed by heart disease and stroke. This critical and timely new joint report, authored by American Cancer Society researchers Rijo M. John, Ph.D., director of international tobacco control research, and Hana Ross, Ph.D., strategic director of international tobacco control research, shows that cancer has the greatest economic impact from premature death and disability of all causes of death worldwide.

The data from this study provides compelling new evidence that balancing the world's global health agenda to address cancer will not only save millions of lives, but also billions of dollars. In 2008, cancer accounted for nearly a trillion dollars in economic losses from premature death and disability. The economic toll from cancer is nearly 20 percent higher than heart disease, the second leading cause of economic loss ($895 billion and $753 billion respectively). This analysis does not include direct medical costs, which would further increase, and possibly double, the total economic cost caused by cancer. The lost years of life and productivity caused by cancer represent the single largest drain on national economies, compared to other causes of death, including HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases.

“Cancer’s human toll, in terms of suffering and death, is tragic and largely preventable. We now know that without immediate intervention, the burden of cancer will grow enormously in low- and middle income countries, with demands on health care systems and economic costs that are more than these developing economies can bear,” said John R. Seffrin, PhD, chief executive officer of the American Cancer Society.

For this study, researchers used data from the World Health Organization that combine the death and disability dimensions of illness into a single summary, called a DALY (disability-adjusted life year), for 17 types of cancer as well as the 15 leading causes of death. These data show that there were 83 million years of “healthy life” lost due to death and disability from cancer. To reduce this death toll by one DALY (disability adjusted life year), WHO recommends to invest as much as three times per capita Gross Domestic Product to make an intervention cost-effective.

Death and disability from lung cancer, colon/rectal cancer and breast cancer account for the largest economic costs on a global scale, and the greatest burden in high income countries. In the low-income countries, cancers of the mouth and oropharynx, cervix and breast have the greatest impact. Available interventions to prevent, detect, and/or treat these common cancers could not only save lives but also improve economic development prospects in many nations.

Cancers of the lung, bronchus and trachea by far account for the largest drain – nearly $180 billion yearly – on the global economy. If current trends continue, tobacco will kill 8 million per year by 2030, with more than 80 percent of the deaths taking place in low- to middle-income countries. About one third of those deaths will be

from cancer. Unfortunately, tobacco kills thousands of nonsmokers every year as well – among them an estimated 200,000 who are exposed to it in the workplace.

This landmark economic study comes at a time when cancer and other non-communicable diseases are gaining more attention from the global health community and in the wake of a U.N. General Assembly call for a High-level Meeting on the issue in September 2011. Noncommunicable diseases account for 60% of the world's deaths, yet according to the Center for Global Development, they receive less than 1% of the public and private funding for health.

As the death and disability toll from lung cancer remains high across income levels of nearly all nations, efforts like the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) could have a significant impact in reducing economic losses. The FCTC, the world's first global health treaty and signed by 168 countries, aims to reduce deaths from tobacco usage by regulating the sale and marketing of tobacco products and protecting people from tobacco smoke.

These and other findings in the report are more important than ever in light of the fact that, in 2010, cancer is projected to become the leading cause of death worldwide followed by heart disease and stroke. Sixty percent of the estimated 7.6 million cancer deaths in 2008 and more than half of the estimated 12.4 million cases of cancer diagnosed each year take place in developing countries, yet little research has been focused on the economic impact of the disease in countries where preventable forms of cancer are taking a disproportionate toll.

About the American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society combines an unyielding passion with nearly a century of experience to save lives and end cancer for good. As a global grassroots force of three million volunteers, we fight for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. We save lives by helping you stay well by preventing cancer or detecting it early, helping you get well by being there for you during and after a diagnosis, by finding cures through groundbreaking discovery and fighting back through public policy. 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. To learn more about our global programs, please visit cancer.org/global.

About LIVESTRONG®

Founded in 1997 by cancer survivor and champion cyclist Lance Armstrong and based in Austin, Texas, LIVESTRONG fights for the 28 million people around the world living with cancer today. LIVESTRONG connects individuals to the support they need, leverages funding and resources to spur innovation and engages communities and leaders to drive social change. Known for the iconic yellow wristband, LIVESTRONG's mission is to inspire and empower anyone affected by cancer. For more information visit www.LIVESTRONG.org.

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