

Michael Thun to Retire from American Cancer Society

Leading epidemiologist oversaw Cancer Prevention Studies

ATLANTA – Dec 10, 2012 – Michael J. Thun, MD, MS, vice president emeritus of the American Cancer Society Surveillance and Epidemiology Research program will retire at the end of 2012. Dr. Thun began working at the Society in August of 1989. He says he plans to use retirement "to travel, refuel, and explore opportunities for the next phase of life."

During his tenure at the Society, Dr. Thun has overseen the analyses of the American Cancer Society's large cohort studies, including Cancer Prevention Study 2. That work, along with the work of the late Dr. Jeanne Calle, has informed much of the understanding of cancer prevention. In the past decade, nine studies co-authored by Dr. Thun and Dr. Calle have been cited more than 1,000 times in subsequent studies. Dr. Thun's work has produced groundbreaking data on many issues, with the most innovative contributions concerning aspirin as an anti-cancer agent, the adverse effects of obesity, and the evolving risks of smoking in the United States and worldwide. During his 23 years at the Society, he authored or co-authored over 400 peer reviewed scientific publications on a broad range of topics, including ten publications in the New England Journal of Medicine and over 40 studies in other high impact journals (JAMA, Lancet, Nature, Nature Genetics etc.)

"One of the most appealing aspects of my position is working with the extraordinarily gifted cancer scientists at the American Cancer Society," said Otis W. Brawley, M.D., chief medical officer. "Michael Thun is one of most talented among those folk. He has also recruited many other exceptional researchers, building a department that is the envy of the leading schools of public health in world. He and his colleagues have had tremendous impact, literally defining how to control cancer.

"Michael's contribution to our understanding of cancer risk is hard to overstate," John R. Seffrin, Ph.D., Chief Executive Officer. "For the last few decades, he's been the caretaker of an enormously valuable public health tool: the Cancer Prevention Studies. Millions of Americans volunteered for those studies, and Michael made sure their contribution was treated with respect, while unselfishly sharing this data to improve life for countless others."

Dr. Thun is a Vietnam veteran who received his BA degree from Harvard College in 1970, an M.D. from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine in 1975, and an MS in Epidemiology from the Harvard School of Public Health in 1983. Dr. Thun has worked for 30 years in epidemiology and disease prevention, first as a Medical Officer at the New Jersey State Health Department investigating toxic exposures (1978-80), then as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer and staff scientist for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (1980-1988).

He became Director of Analytic Epidemiology for the American Cancer Society in 1989, and in 1998 became Vice President of Epidemiology and Surveillance Research. He currently serves as Vice President, Emeritus of Surveillance and Epidemiology Research. He has served on numerous advisory groups for the Institute of Medicine, World Health Organization, International Agency for Research on Cancer, National Research Council, National Cancer Institute, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and is an adjunct professor at Emory University, Rollins School of Public Health and the Winship Cancer Center. In 2010, he received the American Association of Cancer Research-American Cancer Society Award for Research Excellence in Cancer Epidemiology and Prevention for his contributions over 30 years.

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