

# **American Cancer Society Honors Influential Women for Global Leadership in Fighting Non-communicable Diseases**

## **President of Brazil and First Lady of South Africa to Receive Awards for Their Work in Addressing the Burden of NCDs on Women Worldwide**

ATLANTA – September 15, 2011 –Millions of women worldwide are at greater risk than ever from the threat of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) including cancer, making it an urgent issue for global leaders who have gathered in New York City to attend the first-ever United Nations High-level Meeting on NCDs. On Monday September 19, the American Cancer Society and its partners will recognize two influential women from across the globe who are leading efforts to address the impending pandemic.

Her Most Excellency Dilma V. Rousseff, President of the Federal Republic of Brazil, will receive an award for her personal cancer survivorship and her global leadership on NCDs. President Rousseff has taken inspiration from her personal experience with cancer – she was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin lymphoma in 2009 – to fight for health policies and programs that acknowledge NCDs and include proactive measures to prevent and treat them. Earlier this year, President Rousseff announced a 2.8 billion-dollar investment by the Brazilian government to create a new program for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of breast and cervical cancers.

The Society will also award Her Excellency Madam Tobeka S. Zuma, First lady of the Republic of South Africa for her leadership in cancer, NCDs and women's health. Madam Zuma has championed the need to reduce the burden of breast and cervical cancers in South Africa and throughout the rest of Africa through high-profile roles that have included serving as chairperson of the Forum for African First Ladies Against Breast and Cervical Cancer (FAFLABCC), serving as a spokesperson on key cancer issues on behalf of the Cancer Association of South Africa and raising awareness on the need to make cancer a global priority.

There has been a shift in the global health community's efforts in women's health from pregnancy and HIV-related health issues in low and middle-income countries to the growing issue of NCDs, which not only threaten low and middle-income countries, but developed countries as well. Barriers such as social, gender and economic inequalities prevent women from accessing health information, life-saving technologies and access to quality health care that can prevent and treat NCDs. Unfortunately, NCDs pose a bigger threat to women, causing 65 percent of female deaths globally.

President Rousseff and Madam Zuma will both be honored at a reception following a panel discussion moderated by Richard Besser, M.D., chief health and medical editor, ABC News that addresses the emerging burden of NCDs within a woman's health lifecycle. The event will ultimately launch a task force that will bring together key women's health and NCD organizations to improve

women's health outcomes, reduce the global impact of NCDs in women, and build an integrated approach to women's health.

"We are pleased to be able to honor President Rousseff and Madam Zuma for their hard work and personal commitment to addressing cancer and other NCDs," said John R. Seffrin, Ph.D., CEO of the American Cancer Society. "Women across the globe continue to bear the unequal burden of cancer and other NCDs, and there is a strong need for leadership to step in and join forces with other organizations to reduce the impact of NCDs on women worldwide. We are grateful to have such dedicated leaders who are helping to support our goals."

The American Cancer Society is working through its Brazil Breast Cancer Action Program to strengthen breast cancer control through raising public awareness, promoting policy change, and strengthening breast cancer organizations. Through training, grants, and technical assistance to breast cancer NGOs throughout Brazil, the Society works to increase their advocacy skills, empower survivors to speak up about their cancer experiences, and engage with decision makers for improved access to and quality of breast care.

South Africa is a leader in mobilizing a regional movement of advocates committed to advancing the fight against cancer in a part of the world where this disease is often considered a death sentence. Survivors and advocates in South Africa recently held a successful Patient Forum that urged leaders to make cancer a national and global priority.

This award ceremony is co-hosted by the American Cancer Society, GAVI Alliance, the Partnership for Maternal Newborn and Child Health, PATH, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Heart Federation and Women Deliver. For more information on the American Cancer Society's global efforts, visit [www.global.cancer.org](http://www.global.cancer.org).

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 more than \$3.5 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](http://cancer.org).

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