

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Facts

Cancer is the second leading cause of death among adults in the United States and affects an estimated 1 in 3 individuals in their lifetime, either through their own diagnosis or that of a loved one (ACS, 2003). Increasing innovations in medical technology have led to earlier diagnoses and improved treatment of many cancers, resulting in more people diagnosed with cancer surviving each year. Currently, approximately 62% of cancer survivors are expected to live at least 5 years after diagnosis (ACS, 2003). As of January 2000, there were approximately 9.6 million cancer survivors in the United States (NCI, 2003a). This estimate includes people diagnosed with cancer but does not include others affected by a diagnosis, such as family members and friends.

The Challenge

Public health programs address the prevention and control of health problems affecting large groups of people. Although many public health initiatives address early detection, prevention, and control of cancer, public health is new to the cancer survivorship arena. Throughout this National Action Plan, the term “cancer survivors” refers to those people who have been diagnosed with cancer and the people in their lives who are affected by their diagnosis, including family members, friends, and caregivers. Cancer survivors could benefit tremendously from a coordinated public health effort to support them. Survivors face numerous physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and financial issues throughout their diagnosis and treatment and for the remaining years of their lives. Many of these issues could be successfully addressed through public health initiatives, both by the prevention of secondary diseases or recurrence of cancer and by improving quality of life for each survivor. A public health effort to address cancer survivorship supports the Healthy People 2010 goal to increase the proportion of cancer survivors who are living 5 years or longer after diagnosis to 70% (USDHHS, 2000). Further, the financial burden of cancer treatment is estimated to be at least \$41 billion annually (NCI, 2003b), and this dollar amount does not reflect the burden of cancer on the survivor in every other realm of life. Given this information, it is in the country’s best interest to more effectively and systematically provide public health services to cancer survivors.

The Plan

A National Action Plan for Cancer Survivorship: Advancing Public Health Strategies was developed through a partnership between the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Lance Armstrong Foundation (LAF) to identify and prioritize cancer survivorship needs that will advance cancer survivorship public health efforts. Specific objectives of the National Action Plan include the following:

- Achieve the cancer survivorship-related objectives in Healthy People 2010 that include benchmarks for success in measuring improvements for addressing ongoing survivor needs.
- Increase awareness among the general public, policy makers, survivors, providers, and others of cancer survivorship and its impact.
- Establish a solid base of applied research and scientific knowledge on the ongoing physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and economic issues facing cancer survivors.
- Identify appropriate mechanisms and resources for ongoing surveillance of people living with, through, and beyond cancer.
- Establish or maintain training for health care professionals to improve delivery of services and increase awareness of issues faced by cancer survivors.
- Implement effective and proven programs and policies to address cancer survivorship more comprehensively.
- Ensure that all cancer survivors have adequate access to high-quality treatment and other post-treatment follow-up services.
- Implement an evaluation methodology that will monitor quality and effectiveness of the outcomes of initiatives.

Once these objectives were identified, CDC and LAF brought together experts in cancer survivorship and public health to create this National Action Plan. Needs and strategies for addressing these needs were discussed within four core public health components:

- Surveillance and applied research
- Communication, education, and training
- Programs, policies, and infrastructure
- Access to quality care and services

This National Action Plan represents these discussions and sets priorities and identifies strategies for national, state, and community-level public health organizations. Given the importance

of this health issue—its prevalence, its impact on quality of life, and the resulting costs to survivors and others in their lives—the time for action is now. This National Action Plan should be used to guide the allocation of resources to decrease the burden of cancer for all Americans and improve the overall experience and quality of life of the millions who are living with, through, and beyond cancer.

Carlos, Cancer Survivor



“Survivorship means being given a second chance at life.”