



## Association of American Cancer Institutes COMMENTARY

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### Answering the Call for Collaboration to Expand Discoveries and Address Disparities

BY STANTON L. GERSON, MD

Public interest in cancer discovery has incredible traction; many people and institutions across the country are helping to expand the impact of our discoveries and to instill a sense of urgency that every household be included in the benefits of cancer research. I recently learned about some creative, exciting efforts to expand cancer discovery as a panelist at the Biden Cancer Initiative Colloquium, held in April at the American Association for Cancer Research Annual Meeting 2018, in Chicago.

#### Commentary Overview

\* The Biden Cancer Initiative Colloquium highlighted efforts to expand cancer discovery and reduce disparities by a diverse group of organizations including Uber, Deloitte, and Bristol-Myers Squibb.

\* Case Comprehensive Cancer Center is working to drive down smoking rates for people who have been diagnosed with cancer, focusing on communities with higher incidences of smoking-related cancers.

\* The report, "Future

The Biden Cancer Initiative is a nonprofit established by former Vice President Joe Biden and Jill Biden, PhD in June 2017, to accelerate progress in cancer prevention, detection, treatment, and care.

During the panel discussion, I highlighted ways that Case Comprehensive Cancer Center is addressing disparities in cancer, including a tobacco cessation intervention led by Monica Webb Hooper, PhD. Dr. Hooper became director of Case Comprehensive Cancer Center's Office of Cancer Disparities Research in 2016 and was closely involved with the vice president's visit to Cleveland to learn about the city's contributions to his "Cancer Moonshot" goals.

In an initiative begun as a collaboration with the Milken Institute School of Public Health at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., Case Comprehensive Cancer Center is working to drive down smoking rates for people who have been diagnosed with cancer, focusing on communities--as in Cleveland--with higher incidences of smoking-

cancer research priorities in the USA: a Lancet Oncology Commission," sets out a detailed roadmap to deliver on the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Moonshot Blue Ribbon Panel recommendations.

#### About AACI Commentary

As part of AACI's efforts to feature the work and views of its member centers, AACI publishes *AACI Commentary*, a quarterly editorial series. Written by cancer center leaders, each edition focuses on a major issue of common interest to AACI cancer centers.



related cancers including lung cancer. Investigators are also focusing on cervical and other cancers linked to human papillomavirus (HPV), first by increasing vaccination rates in children.

Another on-the-ground effort featured at the Biden Colloquium is a platform launched this year by ride-hailing company Uber to transport patients to doctor appointments and clinical research and clinical trial visits. It is estimated that around 3.6 million people miss their medical appointments annually because of transportation issues. As detailed by Jay Holley, head of partnerships for Uber Health, the company is striving to ensure that transportation is not a barrier to healthcare.

Deloitte, the global consulting network, is helping to develop expanded prevention-access programs and facilitate cost-management and cross-institution efforts using their "visioneering" savvy to improve early detection testing. Deloitte is preparing to launch what it has dubbed the "Cancer XPRIZE." The development process for the prize included input from nine international teams sharing impact design proposals for a range of cancer challenges. According to the firm, Cancer XPRIZE is aimed at developing accurate, rapid, and affordable screening for early cancer, as well as addressing market failures of siloed ecosystems, regulatory complexity, misaligned incentives, and barriers to entry for new ideas.

The Biden Colloquium panel also included details about disease-specific initiatives. One, from the Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, is backing efforts to improve lung cancer survivorship, especially in the age of intraosseous infusion treatments. The initiative, called Bridging Cancer Care™, supports community-based resources and survivorship support programs expanding to underserved populations, with a primary focus on southeastern states with the highest lung cancer incidence and mortality in the country.

Another effort, the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's (LLS) Beat AML Master Trial, supports a nine-arm study at seven cancer centers for acute myeloid leukemia (AML) in older patients and intends to add sites in the next few months. LLS aims to propose a new treatment paradigm to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the next year, according to Louis J. DeGennaro, PhD, LLS president and CEO.


Memorial Sloan Kettering's Carol Brown, MD, FACOG, FACS, spoke about her work as a gynecologic oncologist and the progress of the moonshot initiative. She discussed how the initiative is helping to reduce cancer disparities among women. She emphasized the importance of increasing enrollment of minority and underserved populations in clinical trials and the need for women to get the HPV vaccine, receive appropriate screenings, and practice a healthy lifestyle. By extending the reach of Memorial's services into underserved

populations in the region, they are helping to bring new approaches and clinical trials to patients where they are being treated.

Carla Tardiff, CEO of Family Reach, discussed how her organization is "reaching" physicians and patients, by encouraging physicians to share Family Reach's financial handbook for patients diagnosed with cancer. Family Reach works to prepare families for the out-of-pocket costs associated with cancer care, and helps them manage their spending and maintain healthy finances as they navigate a cancer diagnosis/treatment, reducing the financial stress of the cancer diagnosis.

Near the conclusion of the Biden colloquium, Greg Simon, president and CEO of the Biden Cancer Initiative, challenged panelists to work together on a cancer-related project during the next 12 months. Ms. Tardiff is leading the charge, and has asked for my input on an appropriate project.

I encourage you to also be involved: Start by reviewing the report, "**Future cancer research priorities in the USA: a Lancet Oncology Commission**," authored by Elizabeth M. Jaffe, MD, deputy director of the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins, Chi Van Dang, MD, PhD, scientific director of the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, and many other cancer center colleagues.

The report sets out a detailed roadmap to deliver on NCI's Cancer Moonshot Blue Ribbon Panel recommendations, including a focus on prevention, a new model for drug discovery and development, a vast expansion of patient access to clinical trials, and an emphasis on targeted interventions to improve cancer care for underserved groups--specifically children, cancer survivors, and minority groups. The report emphasizes the importance of addressing health disparities in all recommendations. 

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*Representing 98 of North America's premier academic and free-standing cancer centers, the Association of American Cancer Institutes is dedicated to reducing the burden of cancer by enhancing the impact of leading cancer centers.*

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