

Medical Milestones

Sixty Years Of Progress In The Fight Against Cancer ㊦

(NAPSA)—The year 1946 saw a number of new beginnings. The United Nations held its first meeting. Cannes, France held its first film festival. The University of Pennsylvania fired up ENIAC, the first general-purpose electronic computer, for the first time.

Also in 1946, the American Cancer Society (ACS) launched its research program with \$1,000,000 raised by supporter Mary Lasker of New York. With this money, the Society awarded its first competitive, peer-reviewed research grants, handing out 133 grants to researchers at 47 institutions. Sixty years and about \$3 billion later, research funded by the American Cancer Society has played a leading role in the remarkable progress made against cancer. Research done or supported by the Society has played a part in virtually every major advancement in cancer over the past half century and has helped save or improve the lives of millions of Americans.

Here's a brief look at how things have changed since 1946.

Then: Only one in three Americans diagnosed with cancer could expect to live five years. Little was known about cancer and its causes, how to prevent it, and the best ways to treat the disease. In 1946, Drs. Wendell Stanley and Herman Muller became the first Society-supported researchers to receive the Nobel Prize. A year later, ACS-funded Sidney Farber achieved remission in childhood leukemia, the first successful use of chemotherapy against cancer. Chemotherapy soon began to save thousands of lives each year.

Now: The death rate for all cancers combined is dropping about 1.1 percent per year, while the rate of new cancers is holding

steady. The drop in cancer death rates from 1991 to 2002 alone prevented an estimated 321,000 deaths during that 11-year period. Survival rates for all cancers combined have nearly doubled since 1946, so that two out of three people diagnosed with cancer can now be expected to live five years later or longer.

During 2006, the American Cancer Society will celebrate the 60th anniversary of its research program, now the largest private, not-for-profit source of funds in the US for scientists studying all types of cancer. ACS-funded research has led to groundbreaking treatments that not only save lives but keep cancer under control with reduced or few side effects.

In its 60 years, the American Cancer Society's research program has funded 38 Nobel Laureates, most of them early in their careers when funding is particularly difficult to get.

The Society today funds some of the most promising areas of cancer research: genetics, chemoprevention, targeted therapies, monoclonal antibodies, and vaccines.

The advances in research, along with gains in diagnosis and treatment, have also helped to change attitudes. In 1946, according to a Gallup Poll, one in five Americans thought cancer was contagious and two out of three called cancer the most dreaded disease.

Today, over 10 million Americans are alive who have been diagnosed with cancer in their lifetimes. A powerful voice in Washington, cancer survivors push for legislation to protect their rights and call for research to fight the disease.

To learn more, visit the Web site at www.cancer.org.