

# American cancer society celebrates 100 years of progress

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One million cancer deaths avoided since 1990s, group says.

(HealthDay)—The American Cancer Society, which is celebrating on Wednesday a century of fighting a disease once viewed as a death sentence, is making a pledge to put itself out of business.

Since 1913, the cancer society has played a role in nearly every major cancer research breakthrough. This year alone, the group reported a 20 percent drop in cancer death rates since the 1990s, which amounts to more than one million cancer deaths avoided in that time period.

And two out of three people diagnosed with cancer today survive the disease for at least five years, cancer society officials noted.

"We began our fight against cancer at a time when the word 'cancer' was rarely mentioned in public," John Seffrin, CEO of the cancer society, said in a society news release. "In our 100 years of existence, we have

contributed to many groundbreaking discoveries that have brought us closer to understanding, preventing and treating the disease, and this century, we are looking to put ourselves out of business by making it cancer's last century."

Established by 15 New York City doctors and business leaders, the group was first known as the American Society for the Control of Cancer.

Dr. Vincent DeVita Jr., national volunteer president of the cancer society, recalled that in 1970 it was projected that [cancer incidence](#) and mortality would continue to rise beyond the year 2000. "Today, not only have [mortality rates](#) declined since the early 1990s, but we're averting more than 400 cancer deaths every day," he said in the news release. "Due in part to the work of the [American Cancer Society](#), what seemed nearly impossible is now reality."

The group is the largest voluntary health organization in the United States. Over the years, the cancer society has also helped cut smoking rates by 50 percent after helping establish the link between cancer and [tobacco use](#).

Aside from supporting [cancer research](#), the cancer society provides free lodging and transportation for cancer patients who need to travel for treatment, as well as their families. The group also has a free 1-800-227-2345 help line, which helps people with cancer access the resources they need, from support groups to wig makers.

"It's exciting to see the progress we have made against cancer, but we can't relax our efforts in the fight against this disease," Gary Reedy, volunteer chair of the cancer society board of directors, said in the news release. "Now more than ever, we need everyone's help to make this cancer's last century. There cannot be too many hands on deck."

**More information:** To learn more visit the [American Cancer Society](#).

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