

Game-changing shift occurring in cancer discovery and treatment

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Research advances that have come to fruition over the past year demonstrate extraordinary progress in the fight against cancer, according to a new report released today by the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO). The report stresses, however, that recent budget cuts and years-long flat funding can only delay efforts to translate research into effective treatments for millions of individuals with cancer.

Clinical Cancer Advances 2013: ASCO's Annual Report on Progress Against Cancer reveals how marked expansion in our knowledge and understanding of [cancer](#) is already improving treatment while also pointing the way towards even more effective approaches in the future. Published today in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, the ASCO report covers a broad range of cancer types and highlights a selection of the most recent achievements across the entire continuum of [cancer care](#), from prevention and screening to treatment and survivorship.

"For patients today, these results can be critical. Scientifically, they demonstrate how our long term investment in science and technology can yield practical advances now and in the near future," said ASCO President Clifford A. Hudis, MD, FACP. "With these reports, we are witnessing the acceleration of our shift into a new era of medicine in which our knowledge of the molecular basis and activity of cancers leads to ever more precise treatments that offer increased efficacy and reduced toxicities. The research progress just this year in so many cancers is proof that targeted, precision medicine is now a reality for an increasing number of patients."

The 76 advances highlighted in this year's Clinical Cancer Advances report represent intriguing singular developments in [cancer research](#). However, ASCO notes that it is what these advances represent collectively that gives tremendous hope to anyone who receives a cancer diagnosis in the future. Three areas of progress, in particular, provide important new insights into cancer care:

Genomics—new research demonstrated how understanding the genetic make-up of cancer is already helping doctors make better, more individualized treatment decisions, as well as how it will guide future drug discovery and development.

Treatment-resistant cancers—new research produced first-ever effective therapies for cancers that have historically been especially resistant.

Targeted immunotherapy—new research showed how we can harness patients' own immune system to effectively treat a growing number of [cancer types](#).

"Our report catalogues the most significant gains made in oncology, as identified by leading experts in the field," said Jyoti Patel, MD, the report's co-executive editor. "Building on prior decades of critical, foundational research, this year revealed remarkable progress on a wide range of cancers, including some cancers for which there had been frustratingly limited success over decades. The advances highlighted in this report translate to improvements in patient outcomes and will allow doctors to better predict which drugs will improve survival for which patients."

This year's Clinical Cancer Advances also offers an overview of the policy developments and issues critical to the future of cancer research in this country. The report states that progress against cancer—and the recent strides in improving patient care, survival, and quality of

life—were due, in large measure, to our nation's investment in cancer research over the past four decades. Since the 1990s, cancer death rates have declined 21 percent among men and 12 percent among women.

But, with an estimated 1.6 million Americans diagnosed with cancer this year, about 580,000 American lives lost to cancer in 2013, and associated with a growing, aging, and more overweight population that makes it likely that cancer will become the leading cause of death by 2030, (with an increase of 40% in the total number of new cancer cases), the need to identify new, effective treatments will continue to intensify.

"As a nation, we face an escalating problem with previously unimaginable tools. Now, we can either let the incredible momentum we're witnessing in cancer progress stall, or we can support biomedical studies that will help people with cancer live longer and with a better quality of life," said ASCO President Hudis. "To accelerate the pace of this important research, we're asking Congress to do its part to re-ignite our nation's commitment to cancer research. Lives depend on it."

ASCO is seeking at least \$32 billion in funding for the NIH in 2014 to sustain current projects. The Society is also calling on Congress to reverse the federal budget sequester that triggered across-the-board cuts to cancer research in the United States. The sequester, combined with flat research funding over the last decade, has caused the purchasing power of the National Institutes of Health to fall by 23 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars since 2003.

Provided by American Society of Clinical Oncology

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