

Fund Programs Addressing Looming Epidemic of Liver Disease & Growing Liver Cancer Cases

Liver cancer is the fastest-growing cause of cancer deaths in the United States and one of the deadliest cancers globally. More than 800,000 individuals are diagnosed annually, and incidence of liver cancer is expected to increase by 137% by 2023. Liver cancer is most commonly associated with long-lasting liver disease.

Liver diseases associated with liver cancer are often treatable and/or preventable.

Hepatitis C is co-indicated in more than half of people with liver cancers. Yet, the 2.4 million people with hepatitis C in the U.S. could be cured by oral agents with 95% to 97% effectiveness.

Nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) leads to liver cancer in up to 12% of NASH patients. Among the 40 million people in the U.S. living with NASH, around 10% of children have NASH, with researchers calling it a looming epidemic. If diagnosed, effective interventions can delay disease progression or even reverse the disease, thereby preventing liver cancer. Yet, clinicians are often not trained to diagnose NASH early, nor is our health system supporting early diagnosis.

Hepatitis B is associated with liver cancer in 15 percent of liver cancer cases. Approximately 296 million people, including over 6 million children under age 5, have hepatitis B despite the availability of vaccination to prevent it.

Congress must address liver disease to save lives and reduce liver cancer.

- Liver cancer is not identified among the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Cancer Programs.
- Liver disease research falls under the National Institutes for Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) yet given little attention.
- The National Cancer Institute (NCI) does not prioritize liver cancer research; yet, we know the most efficient and effective way to reduce cancer and work toward the Cancer Moonshot would be to address the liver disease that is associated with increasing numbers of people in the United States with liver cancer.

We recommend Labor/HHS appropriations to reduce liver disease and liver cancers.

- Increase funding to CDC's Division of Viral Hepatitis: Fund programs to eliminate hepatitis C; fund campaign to screen and treat NASH early; fund hepatitis B vaccination.
- Increase NIH funding for NCI and NIDDK to address liver cancer and disease research.
- Retain Senate report language directing NCI's Clinical Trials and Translational Research Advisory Committee [CTAC] to issue a report listing research focus areas for liver cancers.
- Retain Senate report language encouraging AHRQ & others to evaluate the prevalence, diagnoses, treatments, and complications associated with NAFLD, which leads to NASH.

Prevention, early detection and treatment of liver disease will reduce liver cancer diagnoses and deaths, making possible the Cancer Moonshot's goal to reduce cancer cases by 50%.

