

Are We Winning the War on Cancer?

As Americans marked National Cancer Survivors Day in June, a new report found the number of survivors now exceeds 14.5 million people. And, according to the American Cancer Society, that number is expected to grow to 19 million in the next decade.

The ACS report shows two-thirds of today's cancer survivors were diagnosed at least five years ago, and 15 percent were diagnosed 20 or more years ago.

Among those survivors is Susan Hoffman of Knoxville, Tennessee, who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2010. The mother of two said Herceptin, the first targeted medicine approved by the FDA, saved her life.

"If that hadn't been around, it (her cancer) probably would have returned," Hoffman told east Tennessee television station WBIR.

Hoffman, who had her last round of chemotherapy in 2011, is now encouraging others in their battle against cancer.

"That's something that I think as a survivor that I can do," she said. "To say you can get through this and that you will have a good life on the other side."

The second edition of Cancer Treatment & Survivorship Facts & Figures, 2014-2015 and an accompanying journal article published in CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians find that even though cancer incidence rates have been decreasing for 10 years, the number of cancer survivors is growing. This is the result of increases in cancer diagnoses driven by the aging and growth of the population, as well as the fact that people are living longer with cancer because of earlier cancer

detection and more effective treatments.

The three most common cancers among males living with a history of cancer in 2014 are prostate (43%), colorectal (9%) and melanoma (8%). Among women in 2014, the three most common cancers are breast (41%), uterine (8%) and colorectal (8%). While lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths and the second-most commonly diagnosed cancer in both men and women, a low survival rate makes it the No. 8 variety of cancer among survivors. The distribution of prevalent cancers is expected to be largely unchanged in 2024.

Other selected findings:

- The majority of cancer survivors (64%) were diagnosed five or more years previously, and 15% were diagnosed 20 or more years ago.
- Nearly one-half of cancer survivors (46%) are aged 70 years or older, while one in 20 (5%) is under age 40.
- The age distribution of cancer survivors varies substantially by cancer type. For example, the majority of prostate cancer survivors (62%) are aged 70 and older, whereas fewer than one-third (32%) of melanoma survivors are in this age group.

By January 1, 2024, it is estimated that the population of cancer survivors will increase to nearly 19 million Americans (9.3 million males and 9.6 million females).

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