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What's next after the anniversary of Biden reigniting Cancer Moonshot

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The Buzz This Week

In 2016, President Obama signed the 21st Century Cures Act into law, launching a commitment to cancer research in a program dubbed "Cancer Moonshot." 2023 was slated to be the final year for the original \$1.8 billion, but in 2022 President Biden renewed the country's commitment by setting a new goal of "reducing the cancer death rate by at least 50% over the next 25 years and improving the experience and lives of people with cancer, their families, and cancer survivors, ultimately ending cancer as we know it today." Additionally, President Biden's 2022 announcement added new leadership resources in the form of a White House Cancer Moonshot Coordinator and a Cancer Cabinet. Last month marked the one-year anniversary of President Biden's reignition.

On the anniversary of his renewal, President Biden appointed 6 members to the National Cancer Advisory Board and announced 13 new initiatives directed at cancer care and prevention. Though President Biden's recommitment in 2022 did not include any additional funding, these new initiatives include investments in areas of cancer screening and research and emphasize the importance of public-private partnerships to achieving the Cancer Moonshot goals.

The following programs are some of the key initiatives introduced:

- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), announced \$11 million for 22 HRSA-funded health centers to improve access to cancer screening and early detection in underserved communities. This award more than doubles the HRSA's \$5 million investment from 2022.
- HHS is also launching CancerX, a national innovation accelerator aimed at supporting biotech and health tech start-ups to fast track cancer research and provide digital solutions to support and coordinate cancer care. The hope is to develop solutions focused on the full continuum of care, including prevention,

detection, treatment, and transition of care. CancerX will follow the same model as HHS' previous initiatives, KidneyX and PandemicX.

- The National Cancer Institute (NCI) is launching the Childhood Cancer–Data Integration for Research, Education, Care, and Clinical Trials (CC-DIRECT). This program is intended to support children, adolescents, and young adults with cancer, as well as their families, in accessing any resources they may need to navigate their cancer journey.
- The NCI is also introducing several new research programs, including early career grant programs for underrepresented researchers, Telehealth Research Centers of Excellence (TRACE), and the Multi-Cancer Detection (MCD) Vanguard Study. These programs will offer more than \$150 million in funding over the next 5 years.

Why It Matters

Since its launch, Cancer Moonshot has supported more than 70 programs and more than 250 research projects. Its renewal will be critical to further advancing the delivery of cancer care. 2020 saw a 20% drop in the number of cancer deaths from 2001, and additional data suggests cancer death rates have fallen by a third since 1991, avoiding 3.8 million deaths in that time. Despite this progress, significant work lies ahead as cancer continues to be the second leading cause of death in the U.S., behind heart disease.

Though total number of deaths is declining, certain cancers have a rising prevalence. For example:

- Liver cancer incidence has more than tripled since 1980.
- Skin cancer has seen a rapid increase since the 1980's, with invasive melanoma increasing 2% annually between 2008 and 2017.
- Between 2008 and 2017, breast cancer rates increased 0.5% annually, and kidney and renal cancers increased 1%.
- Since 1975, average child cancer rates have increased 0.6% per year and 0.7% among adolescents.
- Pancreatic cancer has seen a 1% annual incidence increase and a 0.3% increase in mortality since 2000.

Additionally, there are significant racial disparities in cancer outcomes, screening, and treatment. While white Americans have the highest rate of new cancer diagnoses, Black Americans have the highest rate of cancer deaths and often later stage diagnoses—a dynamic which is influenced by disparities in both screening and treatment. The Cancer Moonshot will dedicate \$216 million this year to key areas like addressing inequities across patient population, increasing earlier diagnoses, boosting care coordination, advancing cancer prevention, leveraging research and data, and supporting all those impacted by cancer diagnoses.

The new investments made across government organizations and in partnership with private organizations will help to further advance these high-priority issues and serve as a cornerstone in continuing the progress that has been made over the past several decades. The Cancer Moonshot and these programs continue to

work toward closing the gap and further reducing the number of cancer deaths.

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