



Recommendations

Strengthening Public Health and Healthcare Systems to Advance Cancer Screening and Care



*Consensus Recommendations from the
American Cancer Society National Consortium
for Cancer Screening and Care*

December 2021



Introduction

The [American Cancer Society National Consortium for Cancer Screening and Care](#) aims to *accelerate, strengthen, and mobilize* around sensible but bold, cancer screening and care activities as a collective national response to the COVID-19 pandemic's detrimental impact. Through strategic planning forums in the fall of 2021, the American Cancer Society ([ACS](#)) National Consortium collaborated to identify actionable recommendations to strengthen our preparedness, infrastructure, and partnerships to minimize disruptions and address inequities. If adopted widely, these recommendations will minimize the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and move us forward as the nation reprioritizes cancer screening and care. This document summarizes the recommendations from the September 9, 2021, forum on *Strengthening Public Health and Healthcare Systems to Advance Cancer Screening and Care*.

Recommendation: Public Trust

Strengthen the trust in public health and healthcare systems by using a forward-looking, whole-person approach.

Strategies

- **Healthcare providers should adopt whole-person approaches** to introduce timely and relevant cancer prevention and screening education when treating chronic conditions and co-morbidities.
 - *Payment reform must support the whole-person approach in the clinical setting.*
- **The integration of whole-person approaches should include behavioral health experts, community health workers, and navigators** into cancer prevention, screening, and care interventions.
- **Improve the understanding of medical mistrust** by conducting community-based participatory research. Use the findings to change organizational policies and practices, inform healthcare providers and professionals, and adjust messaging to reach apprehensive communities.
- **Empower receiving communities** to guide the content and delivery of messaging about cancer screening in culturally-appropriate ways. Develop public awareness campaigns that build trust prior to interactions with healthcare providers.

Recommendation: Comprehensive Preparedness Planning

Strengthen health system and community preparedness plans for health disruptions by including cancer and other chronic disease care in the plans.

Strategies

- **All healthcare organizations such as hospitals, community health centers, state departments of health should delegate a champion** to create a preparedness plan that addresses cancer and other chronic diseases. Preparedness plans must include cancer needs (i.e., continuity of screening, diagnosis, and treatments) with a goal to minimize disruptions to care with careful consideration of underlying risks and health equity.
- **Community partnerships, representation, and accountability.** Health systems should be responsive to the communities they serve and create accountable partnerships. Patient advocacy groups and other community organizations should have representation via direct participation and influence in the development of health system preparedness plans.
- **Create community messaging plans and structure.** Ensure preparedness plans encompass all voices of the community and set up two-way communication paths between health systems and the community. This will ensure that during the next emergency, including a pandemic, trust will be maintained and strengthened, and response messages will be effectively disseminated.
- **Assess federal, state, and local policy options** that would provide resources to states and counties to help establish health preparedness emergency committees. The preparedness committees would help to clarify the roles at the federal, state, and local levels, and each committee would include a cancer expert.

Recommendation: Document and Understand Cancer Disparities

Strengthen the understanding of outcomes in cancer screening and care by collecting and utilizing demographic and social determinants of health data.

Strategies

- **Identify key players.** Conduct an environmental scan for entities that have the capacity to both collect and utilize needed data. Include national and state agencies, electronic health record companies, and other pertinent data-collection organizations in the inventory produced by the environmental scan.

- **Recommend standards for data collection, reporting requirements, and corrective action plans.** Establish recommendations for best practices in data collection and utilization.
- **Enforce national standards** to ensure quality processes for the collection and reporting of data. Provide organizational and professional training for the people who will collect the data.
- **Aggregate multiple sources of data.** Create a repository of de-identified and publicly available data, including data from the Health Resources & Services Administration ([HRSA](#)), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid ([CMS](#)), private payers, and electronic health record vendors. Provide guidance on how to leverage the data at the state and local levels.
- **Utilize data for planning and evaluation.** Data should inform the development and evaluation of interventions that address disparities in the entire cancer care continuum, including survivorship.

Recommendation: Transdisciplinary Teams

Strengthen transdisciplinary teamwork in support of healthcare delivery.

Strategies

- **Coordinate more connections between interdisciplinary healthcare teams** that do not normally work together. This occurred out of necessity throughout the pandemic in response to patient needs and/or safety and as a response to organizational needs and capacities.
- **Establish a national culture of partnership.** National agencies and organizations, like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC](#)) and the American Cancer Society, can broker longitudinal relationships and generate trust among public health, community, government, industry, and healthcare organizations.
- **Normalize the conversations around science and evidence-based approaches.** Build respectful spaces for conversations and reconnection between healthcare and public health professionals, community leaders, and community/patient populations. National, state, and local partners should work together to disseminate tools that emphasize approaches informed by implementation science.
- **Create transdisciplinary professional education opportunities.** Work with traditional and non-traditional partners to create educational opportunities to build a complete foundation of healthcare and science literacy.