



Curing Stomach Cancer: How Congress Can Help

MAINTAIN STOMACH CANCER AS AN ELIGIBLE CANCER FOR RESEARCH FUNDING UNDER THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE'S PRCRP FOR FY 2024

Service members, and oftentimes their families, are exposed to hazardous environments that put them at increased risk of certain cancers, including stomach cancer. The Peer Reviewed Cancer Research Program (PRCRP) was established in 2009 under the umbrella of the DoD's Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs to support military relevant research into specifically designated cancers. Stomach cancer was first included in the PRCRP in FY 2015. It is vital stomach cancer remains in the PRCRP for FY 2024 and that the program's funding is increased.

The Department of Veterans Affairs considers stomach cancer to be a service-connected malignancy due to hazardous exposures, including ionizing radiation and other toxins.¹ Additionally, U.S. military personnel who serve overseas have a higher encounter rate with the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori* (*H. pylori*) due to poor sanitary conditions and improper food storage. *H. pylori* is a primary identified cause of stomach cancer.^{2,3}

Inclusion of stomach cancer in the PRCRP is making a difference in understanding this historically under-researched cancer and maintaining its inclusion in the Program for FY 2024 will allow for continued research advancements.

DDF asks members of Congress to sign a letter to the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense requesting stomach cancer's continued eligibility in the PRCRP. To sign contact: Shir Attias (Rep. Lois Frankel), Drew Kennedy (Rep. Joe Wilson); or Jade Rowland (Sen. Mazie Hirono).

FUND THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE (NCI) AT \$9.998 BILLION FOR FY 2024

Thanks to Congress' past support for the NCI, there has been a historic increase in high-quality cancer research proposal submissions. While NCI is funding more research, worthy research ideas get left on the table. NCI increased the R01 payline to the 11th percentile in FY 2021 and has set a goal to reach a payline at the 15th percentile by FY 2025. To achieve this, sustained and robust annual budget increases are necessary.

In FY 2020, Congress directed the NCI to develop a "strategic plan" for research on gastric and esophageal cancers. Since then, the NCI has awarded six R01 grants under the new *Program on the Origins of Gastroesophageal Cancers*. The NCI *Clinical Trials and Translational Research Advisory Committee ad hoc Gastric and Esophageal Cancers Working Group* was also newly convened. The Working Group issued its report in November 2022 in which it encouraged the NCI to build on the *Program on the Origins of Gastroesophageal Cancer* by adding support for complementary investigations of downstream phases of disease and treatment.

Increased funding to the NCI is critical to fulfilling the recommendations of the NCI Working Group, which broadly include the development of precision approaches for the prevention, screening, detection, surveillance, and treatment of stomach cancer.

¹ National Cancer Strategy, Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, VHA Directive 2003-34. June 20, 2003.

² Program Booklet. Peer Reviewed Cancer Research Program September 2019 <https://cdmrp.army.mil/prcrp/pbks/prcrppbk2019.pdf>

³ Taylor, DN et al. Second International Workshop on Helicobacter pylori Infections in the Developing World: Helicobacter pylori Infection in Desert Storm Troops. Clin Infect Dis. (1997) 25 (5): 979-982 doi:10.1086/516074

With Congress' support, it is possible to end stomach cancer as we know it.