

ABOUT OUR FOUNDER



DEBBIE ZELMAN
1967-2017

In April 2008, when she was a forty-year-old mother of three young children, a wife, and a practicing attorney, Debbie was diagnosed with stage IV advanced, incurable stomach cancer. Her chance of surviving 5 years was only 4%. In the course of searching for treatment options, she quickly learned how difficult this disease is to detect and treat and that the outcome is often grim. Fortunately, working closely with her doctors in academic and community settings, Debbie began responding to treatment. She then decided to use her experience, skills, tenacity, and robust network of friends and supporters to start a movement to raise awareness about stomach cancer, fund research, and help other patients.

In April 2009, Debbie started Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer (DDF), the first 501(c)(3) non-profit organization to advocate for stomach cancer research funding. DDF quickly became the leading voice for stomach cancer advocacy and is currently the international leader for this under-recognized and under-funded disease. Debbie passed away on December 23, 2017, after nearly a decade of fighting fearlessly on behalf of stomach cancer patients, families, and caregivers worldwide. Her legacy lives on through DDF and all those who support her dream of making the cure for stomach cancer a reality.

TOGETHER WE ARE DREAMING BIG!

DDF depends on the generosity of people like you.

Your tax-deductible contribution supports our programs and enables us to fund research. Help us make the dream of finding a cure for stomach cancer a reality!



Visit www.DebbiesDream.org to donate, learn more about this devastating disease, learn how to become involved, ask questions, volunteer, host or attend an event, become a mission ambassador, and/or purchase merchandise.

Please give today and support our cause!

Debbie's Dream Foundation:

Curing Stomach Cancer

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Facebook: [DebbiesDreamFoundation](#)

Twitter: [StomachCancer_](#)

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Debbie's Dream Foundation: Curing Stomach Cancer (DDF) is dedicated to raising awareness about stomach cancer, advancing funding for research, and providing education and support internationally to patients, families, and caregivers. DDF seeks as its ultimate goal to make the cure for stomach cancer a reality!

Pioneering the fight against stomach cancer worldwide!



STOMACH CANCER FACTS

What is Stomach Cancer?

- Stomach cancer, also known as gastric cancer, forms in the tissues lining the stomach.
- **2025 Statistics:**
 - Estimated diagnoses: 30,300 Americans
 - Estimated deaths: 10,780 Americans
 - Fifth-leading type of cancer and the fourth-leading cause of cancer death globally

Diagnosing Stomach Cancer

- **Challenges:**
 - Up to 80% of patients are asymptomatic during the early stages
 - Symptoms like indigestion, heartburn, and nausea are mistaken for **common gastrointestinal issues**
- **Impact:** Delayed diagnosis often leads to significant morbidity and high mortality.

Stomach Cancer Survival Rates

- Overall 5-Year Relative Survival Rate: 38%.
- Late Stage (Distant) 5-Year Survival Rate: 7%.

Alarming Trends

- **Young Adults:** Rising incidence, particularly among women under 50
- **Disparities:** Significant differences in disease burden across ethnic minorities

Risk Factors

Primary Causes:

- Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) Infection: Major identified cause

Additional Risk Factors:

- Chronic gastritis
- Certain diets
- Smoking
- **Family history** - Approximately 10% of stomach cancer cases run in families.

Global Statistics

- **Prevalence and Mortality:** 1.1 million new cases in 2020, making it the fifth most common cancer and the fourth leading cause of cancer death globally, with 800,000 deaths.
- **Regional Impact:** Over 85% of cases are in high Human Development Index countries, with Asia having the highest incidence—820,000 new cases and 580,000 deaths.

DDF STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

- Educate stomach cancer patients, families, caregivers, and healthcare professionals through free informational materials, webinars, and symposia.
- Raise awareness about the reality of a stomach cancer diagnosis and the toll it takes on patients and their families.
- Provide no-cost support and objective, reliable information about treatment options, ongoing research, and clinical trials.
- Fund research directly and through focused advocacy efforts to increase federal funding.
- Serve as the primary resource for health care professionals to refer their stomach cancer patients.
- Encourage collaboration and information sharing among medical professionals, researchers, scientists, pharmaceutical companies, public agencies, and patients.
- Promote health equity and help shed light on health care disparities in populations disproportionately affected by stomach cancer
- Offer free peer-to-peer mentorship networks for patients and caregivers. Provide monthly support groups to help families navigate their journey.

Stomach cancer incidence and mortality (2017-2021) rates by race. *

Race/Ethnicity	Male Incidence	Male Mortality	Female Incidence	Female Mortality
White	7.1	2.8	3.5	1.4
Black	13	6.6	7.8	3.3
Hispanic	11.4	5.7	8	3.8
Asian & Pacific Islander	11.7	5.4	6.8	3.3
American Indian & Alaska Native	13.4	7	8	4

Rates are per 100,000 persons and are age-adjusted to the 2000 United States standard population.



* American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts & Figures 2025. Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2025. <https://cancerstatisticscenter.cancer.org/types/stomach>

**Raising Awareness.
Funding Research.
Supporting Patients.
Achieving the DREAM!**

DDF MILESTONES

- **2011:** Hosted the first Stomach Cancer Patient Education Symposium, now an annual event with global reach featuring expert lectures. Available online at our website.
- **2013:** Initiated the first stomach cancer Capitol Hill Briefing in Washington, DC, leading to the Annual Stomach Cancer Capitol Hill Advocacy Day. Efforts have significantly increased federal research funding.
- **2014:** Partnered with the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), funding \$2.6 million in stomach cancer research to date and fostering opportunities for young researchers.
- **2024:** Formed an international partnership with KIBOUNOKAI in Japan to enhance stomach cancer education and support in the Japanese and Asian communities.
- **2024:** Established a groundbreaking \$551,880 fellowship at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK) for early career researchers in esophageal and gastric cancers.

International partnership with
Certified non-profit organization
KIBOUNOKAI

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2014
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AACR American Association for Cancer Research

Held first-ever stomach cancer Capitol Hill Briefing in Washington, DC

