

CA CONNections

Member Newsletter of The Connecticut Cancer Partnership



December 2016

Cancer and Health Policy Conference

The very timely topic of this year's annual meeting was cancer and health policy. Considering that the conference planning committee chose this topic in April, the immediate relevance of the issues could not have been greater. Over 100 cancer control professionals from all over Connecticut attended the all-day meeting held at the Sheraton in Rocky Hill.

All of the presentations are available on the newly redesigned Partnership website. [Presentations on CCP website](#)

Dr. Meहुl Dalal, CT Department of Public Health Chronic Disease Director, and Vice- Chair of the Connecticut Cancer Partnership Advisory Committee, served as emcee and started the day with comments, followed by Lisa McCooey of the DPH Comprehensive Cancer Control section who launched the day by framing what the policy systems and environment approach means in the context of public health. Amy Davidoff, PhD from the Yale Cancer Center and the Yale School of Medicine, focused in on specific of the Affordable Care Act, (ACA) Medicaid expansion, and Medicare as they relate to cancer. Matthew Katz, CEO of the Connecticut State Medical Society discussed recent developments, including insurance company mergers, results of the ACA to date and possible ramifications of upcoming legislative developments. He discussed Trump appointees' positions on these issues. He wrapped up his presentation by summarizing the state level scenario. Maura Carley discussed the perils facing cancer patients and ways to avoid financial toxicity and what health care professionals can do to support their patients.

During a brief pre-lunch business meeting, a slate of members of the newly-named Advisory Committee (formerly Board of Directors) was voted in for an additional 2-year term. They are: Thomas O. Blank, PhD, Meहुl Dalal, MD, Lou Gonsalves, PhD, Phyllis Osterman, MS, Andrea Silber, MD, and Carol Steinke, RN, BSN. The Partnership bylaws were renamed Guiding Principles through a vote to change the bylaws. The 2016 Connecticut Cancer Champion Award was awarded to Andrea Silber, MD for her contributions to cancer prevention and control in our state. This was the first Connecticut Cancer Champion Award to be given annually to an outstanding Connecticut resident who contributes to cancer prevention and control in our state, and who demonstrates commitment to reducing the burden of cancer in Connecticut through work on policy, systems and environmental change.

The Connecticut Cancer Partnership unites the members of our state's diverse cancer community—academic and clinical institutions, state and local government health agencies, industry and insurers, advocacy and community groups, and cancer survivors. Together, the coalition has developed and is now implementing a comprehensive plan to reduce the suffering and death due to cancer, and improve the quality of life of cancer survivors throughout Connecticut.

Visit our newly improved website:

ctcancerpartnership.org

Cancer Prevention During Early Life

Cancer is caused by a combination of factors over time. One of the papers provides highlights from meetings with nationally recognized experts about possible opportunities for cancer prevention early in life. Research suggests that we can take steps today to protect the health of babies and young children, and reduce their chances of getting cancer in the future.

Dr. Silber is a Medical Oncologist at Smilow Cancer Hospital. She has cared for patients in New Haven for over two decades. She has demonstrated a commitment to improving health equity through her work with the Connecticut Cancer Partnership since its inception, her work with Project Access-New Haven, and in her clinical work with the underserved. Congratulations, Dr. Silber and thank you for your work as a Connecticut Cancer Champion!

After the box lunch, three breakout sessions were held: Dr. Kristen Zarfos and Linda Steinmark followed up the earlier genomics pre-meeting, addressing hereditary breast and ovarian cancer; Dr. Andrew Salner, Director of the Hartford Healthcare Institute, and a radiation oncologist, Bryte Johnson of American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network and Bill Malitsky, a lobbyist with Halloran and Sage provided a perspective on the upcoming Connecticut General Assembly session, and Dr. Patricia LoRusso from Yale discussed the status of the National Cancer Moonshot Initiative and its impact on clinical trials for patients.

The meeting concluded with Dr. Peter Yu, physician in chief of Hartford Healthcare talking about the policy implications of data, drawing on the California cancer registry as an example.

Attendees had the following comments about the meeting:
 "Very timely topic. Excellent speakers. Terrific conference! The topics were interesting and the speakers were excellent. The food and venue were very good. Great information and questions throughout the day!
 Information is very useful to me in my personal and professional life"

Regarding the specific legislative sessions, attendees noted how informative and engaging the content was, helping to bring understanding to complex topics in a complicated time.

The Genomics Breakfast Pre-Meeting was attended by approximately 40 people and featured Laura Senier, MPH, PhD of Northeastern University. The Connecticut Department of Public Health Genomics Office (DPH-GO), with support of a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, sponsored the genomics sessions of the 13th Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Cancer Partnership. Dr. Senier spoke about the important role of public health agencies in ensuring that evidence-based recommendations (e.g., 2013 USPSTF recommendation statement on BRCA-related cancer), are implemented by healthcare practitioners. "Even in an era of 'Evidence-Based Practice,' the existence of expert recommendations is insufficient to ensure integration and routinization of evidence-based guidelines." Dr. Senier discussed how state health agencies have moved beyond the era of promoting family health history, and are promoting screening for hereditary cancer syndromes in the current, evidence-based era. Using examples of public health genomics activities in Michigan and Connecticut, Dr. Senier showed how public health genomics programs' activities represent the practice of essential public health services.

The afternoon genomics breakout session, The Role of Primary Care in Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Syndrome Identification and Management, was attended by approximately 25 people and featured Linda Steinmark, MS, LCGC and Kristen Zarfos, MD. Linda Steinmark, a Consulting Certified Genetic Counselor with the DPH-GO, presented information on red flags for hereditary breast and ovarian cancer syndrome (HBOC); the importance of genetic counseling and testing; evidence-based recommendations related to HBOC; and coverage for genetic services related to BRCA under the Affordable Care Act. Dr. Zarfos, Surgical Director of the Comprehensive Breast Health Center of the Hospital of Central Connecticut, discussed: breast and ovarian

[Cancer prevention starting in babies](#)

Submissions

Please submit articles and/or suggestions to:

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Happy and Healthy Holidays to All from the Connecticut Cancer Partnership!

health; risk-reduction strategies; and cases which exemplified the different types of concerns patients may have. Dr. Zarfos also spoke candidly about her perspective on genetic counseling and testing in the context of her personal experience as a cancer survivor.

States Can Help Finish the Fight Against Tobacco by Boosting Funding for Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Efforts

Connecticut ranked 50th among the states, missing a golden opportunity to save millions of lives and billions of dollars in health care costs because they continue to shortchange proven programs that prevent kids from smoking and help smokers quit, according to a report released Dec. 14 by a coalition of public health organizations. The report challenges states to do more to fight tobacco use - the nation's No. 1 preventable cause of death - and help make the next generation tobacco-free.

This year (fiscal year 2017), the states will collect \$26.6 billion from the 1998 tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes. But they will spend less than two percent of it - just \$491.6 million - on tobacco prevention and cessation programs, according to the annual report assessing state funding of such programs.

The report - "[Broken Promises to Our Children: A State-by-State Look at the 1998 Tobacco Settlement 18 Years Later](#)" - was released by the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights and Truth Initiative.

The U.S. continues to make great strides in reducing cigarette smoking, with smoking rates falling to record lows in 2015 - 15.1 percent among adults and 10.8 percent among high school students. If recent progress in reducing adult smoking continues, the United States would eliminate smoking by around 2035, according to a recent analysis.

[Read the report here](#)

Guidance for Measuring Colorectal Cancer Screening Rates in Health System Clinics

CDC's Colorectal Cancer Control Program has awarded grants to increase colorectal cancer screening rates among a target population within a partner health system, geographical area, or disparate population. Grantees implement evidence-based interventions and other supportive strategies in partnership with health systems to put into place organized screening programs. In addition, grantees measure and report a baseline screening rate for health systems where implementation is planned, followed by an annual screening rate report.

[Read the guidance here](#)

Colorectal Cancer Screening CME Updated

CDC's Screening for Colorectal Cancer: Optimizing Quality continuing education activity has been updated to reflect the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force's latest recommendation. The course provides guidance and tools for primary care physicians and endoscopists on the optimal ways to implement screening for colorectal cancer to help ensure that patients receive maximum benefit.



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