

The Case for Cancer Research: A National Imperative

A letter from Cosimo Commisso, PhD, Interim Director of the NCI-Designated Cancer Center at Sanford Burnham Prebys

At its core, cancer research is about saving lives — real lives, of people we know and love. But the value of cancer research extends far beyond the lab or clinic. It is one of the most powerful engines of human progress, social resilience and economic growth. As Interim Director of the Cancer Center at Sanford Burnham Prebys, I witness firsthand the profound and multifaceted benefits that cancer research delivers to our society.

Investments in cancer research give rise to healthier communities: to children who can grow up without the shadow of a parent lost too soon, to adults who return to their families and careers with renewed hope and to older adults who live longer, more fulfilling lives. These are not abstract benefits; they are tangible outcomes that ripple across generations. Cancer research not only save lives, it restores quality of life, dignity and the possibility of a future.

The economic case is equally compelling. A healthy population is a productive population. Breakthroughs in cancer prevention, early detection and treatment reduce healthcare costs, keep people in the workforce and relieve the burden on families and caregivers. Every dollar invested in biomedical research yields substantial returns through innovation, job creation and the growth of a vibrant biotech economy that anchors the United States as a global leader.

We cannot afford to retreat. America's preeminence in biomedical science is not just a point of pride, it is a competitive advantage that fuels the knowledge economy. Leading cancer centers like ours train the next generation of scientists, launch startups, collaborate with industry and translate discovery into cures. As other nations double down on their scientific investments, we must not curtail federal support for research.

At a time when cancer is poised to become the leading cause of death worldwide, retreating from our commitment to research would place countless lives — and our global leadership — in peril. We owe it to patients, families, our children and ourselves to protect and prioritize cancer research at this critical moment.

Cancer research is a necessity for a thriving, competitive and compassionate America.

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