

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Digital Library Collections

This is a PDF of a folder from our textual collections.

Collection: Correspondence, White House Office of:
Records, 1981-89

Folder Title: Cancer Control Month

Box: Box 83 (1988)

To see more digitized collections visit:

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/digitized-textual-material>

To see all Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Inventories, visit:

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/white-house-inventories>

Contact a reference archivist at: **reagan.library@nara.gov**

Citation Guidelines: <https://reaganlibrary.gov/archives/research-support/citation-guide>

National Archives Catalogue: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>

Last Updated: 05/23/2023



Cancer Control Month, 1988

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In the continuing struggle against cancer, Americans have put their trust in research; today we can affirm that the public trust has been rewarded. Just a few years ago, the cancer cell was seen as a deadly, unsolvable mystery. The mystery is still complex, but today it is considered solvable. We now know a good deal about what the cancer cell does and how it does it.

We have begun to see cancer not as a random event, but as an error in the normal process of growth and development. Researchers have found minute but critical differences in the genes of normal and cancer cells. They have identified and isolated oncogenes, which play a role in changing normal, healthy cells to cancer. And, with every passing day, scientists come closer to understanding how and when oncogenes "turn on" and transform cells.

In time, our knowledge of how oncogenes work may help cure many patients, improve the quality of life for others, stave off recurrences for still others, and enable us to prevent cancer before it starts.

New knowledge about cancer prevention and treatment has improved the outlook for cutting the cancer death rate. With regard to prevention, we now know that type of diet, exposure to the sun, and use of tobacco can trigger events in the cell that cause up to 80 percent of all cancers.

We can reduce our risk of cancer if we take a few sensible steps. Adding fiber and reducing fat in our diet can significantly cut cancer incidence and mortality; we should choose more fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain breads and cereals and cut down on fatty meat, eggs, dairy products, and oils in cooking and salads. Researchers have shown that overexposure to the sun's rays causes skin cancer; they advise us all to wear protective clothing and to use sunscreens to reduce the risk of this illness. The biggest culprit—responsible for 30 percent of all cancer deaths—is smoking and other tobacco use. The scientific evidence linking cigarette smoking to cancers of the lung and mouth is undeniable. Smoking also contributes to cancers of the bladder, pancreas, and kidney. The message is clear: stop smoking or, better yet, don't start.

The U.S. Public Health Service has found that when people are warned about health hazards, they tend to change their habits for the better. More and more of our citizens want information to help protect their health. Of course, the ideal solution is not to let cancer happen; by modifying the way we live, we can greatly reduce our chances of developing this disease.

This year, the American Cancer Society celebrates its 75th anniversary. The work of the American Cancer Society, the National Cancer Institute, and other organizations devoted to cancer research and control has made a difference. Only a few years ago, it was hard to imagine the tremendous progress we see today. Survival rates have improved for 7 of the 10 major forms of cancer; more than 5 million Americans diagnosed with cancer are alive in 1988. Early detection continues to improve the chances of successful treatment; some 385,000 Americans diagnosed with cancer in 1988 will be alive 5 years from now. Once deadly forms of cancer are now yielding to combined treatments of surgery, radiation, drugs, and new biological agents, such as interleukin-2. A diagnosis of breast cancer no longer requires an inevitable mastectomy. Children with leukemia are being treated successfully and living to become productive adults.

In 1938, the Congress of the United States passed a joint resolution (52 Stat. 148; 38 U.S.C. 150) requesting the President to issue an annual proclamation declaring April to be "Cancer Control Month."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the month of April 1988 as Cancer Control Month. I invite the Governors of the fifty States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the appropriate officials of all other areas under the United States flag, to issue similar proclamations. I also ask the health care professionals, communications industry, food industry, community groups, and all other interested organizations and individual citizens to unite during this month to reaffirm publicly our Nation's continuing commitment to control cancer.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-eighth day of March, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twelfth.

Ronald Reagan