

Speaking Up About A Silent Disease

(NAPSA)—Work is being done to raise awareness about a disease that will affect the lives of 32,000 Americans this year.

Every 17 minutes another American will succumb to the disease, which has a 99 percent mortality rate. Experts say pancreatic cancer is one of the deadliest forms of cancer—and there is no known cure.

With no early detection method, diagnosis of pancreatic cancer is extremely difficult because early symptoms are rare and may resemble other health problems. Pancreatic cancer is often referred to as a “silent” disease. But for those who have experienced the pain of the disease, silence on understanding it is not an option.

Currently, only 1 percent of the National Cancer Institute’s (NCI) annual budget is devoted to researching pancreatic cancer. The NCI itself acknowledges—and statistics show—that there has been a minimal decrease in overall incidence or mortality rates for pancreatic cancer in the last 30 years.

Funds for pancreatic cancer research have increased in recent years due to the advocacy efforts of the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network (PanCAN), but more resources must be devoted to understanding this disease if any progress is to be made.

Though the five-year survival rate for pancreatic cancer is a striking 4 percent, the lowest among all forms of cancer, there are some treatment options that can delay its progression or control the disease. Based on the stage of the cancer, patients may



While there is no known cure for pancreatic cancer, there are treatment options that can delay its progression and control it.

undergo surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy or a combination of these treatments. There are only two FDA-approved standard of care chemotherapy drugs for pancreatic cancer.

Risk factors for pancreatic cancer include smoking, long-standing diabetes, chronic pancreatitis and certain hereditary conditions.

While there are few warning signs, the conditions known to precede pancreatic cancer include jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes), abdominal and/or back pain, unexplained weight loss, loss of appetite and fatigue.

Those who have experienced any of these symptoms or risk factors should visit their doctor as soon as possible.

PanCAN is an organization that gives patients knowledge to make informed decisions concerning their treatment and works to build awareness of pancreatic cancer in hopes of finding a cure. Visit www.pancan.org for more information.