ISSUE
40

The Voice

FOR PREVENTION, TREATMENT, AND POLICY

National Center for Health Research

We are dedicated to improving the health and safety of adults and children by using research to develop more effective treatments and policies. The Cancer Prevention and Treatment Fund is our major program.

Cancer Prevention and Treatment Fund

Our Cancer Prevention and Treatment Fund helps adults and children reduce their risk of getting cancer and helps everyone get the best possible treatment.

Cancer Helpline:
info@stopcancerfund.org

Websites:

www.center4research.org
www.stopcancerfund.org

Instagram

@safe.to.play
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@healthresearch4u

CFC #11967





What's New? Is America healthier or less healthy than ever?

Compared to our ancestors, most Americans are living much longer. We know more about how to save lives (no more leeches except under rare circumstances!) but not everyone is benefitting from our new knowledge.

The National Center for Health Research celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2024. Here are some of the major issues we've focused on, how the issues have changed over the years, and how we plan to fight for improvements in the future.

Cancer

We've been pioneers among nonprofit organizations in telling consumers about the numerous ways that eating, smoking, alcohol consumption, and other habits can increase or reduce the chances of developing many types of cancer. Meanwhile, too many new cancer medications are not proven to help patients live longer or have a better quality of life. We are fighting cancer in many ways: policies to help people prevent cancer, warning about inaccurate cancer tests or ineffective treatments, and telling the powers-that-be that they need to do a better job of making sure cancer treatments are effective and affordable.

Prescription Medications

The U.S. spends more per person on healthcare than any other country—twice as much as most comparable nations such as France, Canada, the UK, and Japan. Almost 11 million Americans take 10 or more prescription drugs. And yet, life expectancy in the U.S. is lower than all other large and wealthy countries (such as those listed above); in 1990, life expectancy was similar in the same dozen countries.

Our use of prescription medications is related to the chronic diseases we've developed (diabetes, obesity, heart disease, depression, and many others). It also increased after the U.S. allowed direct-to-consumer ads for prescription drugs starting in 1997. New Zealand is the only other country in the world that allows these ads, which have greatly contributed to a dramatic increase in prescriptions.

Meanwhile, FDA approval standards have become less stringent. Previously, two well-designed studies were required to prove that a drug is safe and effective; now approval can rely on one small, short-term study that doesn't prove a health benefit.We are fighting policies that have resulted in chronic diseases and expensive medications that are not proven to provide meaningful benefits – and may be unsafe – for long-term use.

Implants and Other Medical Devices

Medical devices are more complicated than ever, but many implanted medical devices are sold without any studies being required to make sure they are safe and effective. Breast implants, some cardiac implants, CPAP apnea devices, TMJ implants, and Lasik eye surgery devices are just a few examples of devices with risks that patients aren't warned about. We were the first nonprofit to focus on ensuring that devices are proven safe and effective and to fight for patients to have accurate information so they can make informed decisions.

Health and Your Environment

Many common exposures that are not immediately harmful can eventually cause cancer or other serious diseases. There is a growing awareness that food and beverages stored in plastic can introduce microplastics, PFAS, and other harmful chemicals into our bodies. Similar chemicals are found in toys, in our homes, and in playgrounds and artificial turf. We also now know that living miles away from wildfires or air pollution can be deadly years later. Climate change is causing life-threatening weather, wildfires, and other dangers. For all these reasons, we are a major voice emphasizing the need to reduce exposures through policies that help all Americans.

WE'RE IN THE NEWS

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Our Center does not accept funding from drug companies, device manufacturers, or chemical companies so we rely on the generosity of individual donors. You can donate online at stopcancerfund.org or center4research.org.

Trump's pick for FDA to test 'due diligence' of Agency's science

Bloomberg News, November, 25, 2024

He Regulated Medical Devices. His Wife Represented Their Makers.

The New York Times, August 20, 2024

How Good Is Wegovy's Heart Benefit? — Experts put SELECT trial findings in context

MedPage Today, August 1, 2024

F.D.A. names a new chief of medical devices

New York Times, Oct 22, 2024

Vivek Ramaswamy's crusade to change FDA could boost biotech, and himself

The Washington Post, November 25, 2024

Feds declare turf, rubber playgrounds "generally safe"

Politico E&E NEWS, April 18, 2024

High Levels of Toxic Flame Retardants Found in Toys, Kitchen Utensils Made From Black Plastic

The Defender, October 2, 2024

10 doctors on FDA panel... had financial ties to the company. The FDA didn't disclose the payments.

NBC News and *Kaiser Health News*, April 6, 2024

Scientists urge FDA to rescind approval of test for opioid addiction risk,

The Washington Post, April 5, 2024

Failure of ALS drug puts a spotlight on controversial FDA approvals

The Washington Post, March 16, 2024

Americans Are Paying Billions to Take Drugs That Don't Work

Bloomberg, April 15, 2024

The conflicting comments made by the men named for important health leadership positions in the second Trump Administration has attracted attention and questions. We expressed support for Marty Makary as FDA Commissioner to ***Bloomberg News*** and told ***The Washington Post*** why Vivek Ramaswamy's expertise in pharmaceuticals is a major conflict of interest.

Do financial conflicts of interest harm patients? We told ***The New York Times*** and ***BMJ (formerly British Medical Journal)*** that the revolving door and other financial ties between the FDA and industry raise serious ethical questions. We told ***NBC*** and ***KFF Health News*** that the FDA's standards for conflicts of interest were too loose and told ***Nature*** that RFK Jr's concerns about conflicts of interest at the FDA deserve attention.

Does that expensive new treatment actually work? We told ***The Washington Post*** that the FDA had approved opioids and drugs for ALS despite skimpy evidence and told ***Bloomberg News*** that too many FDA-approved drugs don't work. We told ***MedPage Today*** that Wegovy's benefits for heart disease are exaggerated.

Are toxic exposures impossible to avoid? We told ***The Defender*** that plastic recycling was not as safe or effective as people think and told ***Politico E&E News*** that EPA's report on artificial turf was terribly flawed because it considered too few exposures and did not evaluate the health risks of PFAS or microplastics.

We're Speaking Up!

As a think tank, we frequently share our views with policymakers, government leaders, partner organizations, and health agencies such as the FDA and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). You may wonder what these comments have to do with you or how you are affected by our work. Every week, we testify and share research on your behalf, through written or oral testimonies regarding patient and consumer safety or in meetings with officials. Here are just a few examples of the dozens of recommendations we've made. Most, but not all, were in response to the government's "Request for Public Comments."

Cancer

- FDA considered approving the ProSense cryoablation device to freeze very early breast cancer, instead of lumpectomy surgery. We stated that the ProSense device had not studied patients for enough years to determine if it is as effective at preventing breast cancer recurrence as lumpectomy.
- Our testimony on Guardant blood tests to screen for colorectal cancer pointed out that the blood test is better than nothing but not as accurate as other types of screening. Will patients understand that inaccuracy now that the test is approved by the FDA?
- We testified that Imfinzi has benefits for some lung cancer patients, but that the company did not prove whether this very expensive drug could be as effective if given either before or after surgery instead of both before and after surgery.
- Our testimony on General Snus smokeless tobacco criticized the FDA for concluding it was safer than cigarettes since the company (Altria) did not study people using the product long enough to know how often it causes cancer.

Age, Race, & Medications

When federal agencies request written "public comments" about how best to improve the health of adults or children, we scrutinize the evidence and let them know what we think. For example, we recently urged the FDA to improve incentives for companies to include people of all ages and races in their studies of medical products. We suggested that if the FDA approves products only for the types of patients that research proves are likely to benefit, companies would do a better job of including all ages and races.

FDA Standards

- We testified at a U.S. House of Representatives hearing of the Small Business Committee, describing why the FDA needs to prioritize the safety and effectiveness of medical products while explaining how the agency is helpful to small businesses that are developing new medical products.
- At a public FDA meeting, we testified that Ocalvia, a drug previously approved for a rare liver disease, has risks that outweigh the benefits. FDA advisors agreed with us.
- Our testimony about Sulopenem, an antibiotic seeking approval for urinary tract infections (UTIs), pointed out that the treatment is not proven to work for the patients for whom it is intended.
- In response to FDA's request for recommendations on studying drugs for early Alzheimer's, we urged that the FDA should focus on treatments for people with early symptoms of memory loss and other cognitive problems, not on people who have no cognitive symptoms at all. That is important because many people who have no symptoms will never develop Alzheimer's but could be harmed by a drug's serious side effects.

Environment & Health

We were pleased to present our concerns in person about rubber playground materials at a national CDC meeting on reducing lead exposures in U.S. communities; an annual meeting of the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC); and a private meeting with one of the CPSC Commissioners. At all of these meetings we discussed the risks of lead, PFAS, and other toxic chemicals that are in the colorful rubber surfaces at many preschool, elementary school, and community playgrounds. We also pointed out that the same toxic chemicals that are in the recycled tire rubber in those products are now in similar products being sold directly to families by **Home Depot**, **Amazon**, and many other websites, for use in home playrooms, exercise rooms, and for children's backyard swing sets and other play equipment. We also provided similar information upon request to communities across the country about the risks of these materials for indoor or outdoor use. And we praised EPA for its plans to study PFAS chemicals but criticized their report on artificial turf.

Heart Disease

We provided Medicare with two written comments, urging the agency to not cover the cost of two cardiac implants (TTVR valve replacements and IPAPS artery pressure sensors) unless they are proven to be safe and effective specifically for the kinds of patients on Medicare. That's important because many Medicare patients are over 75 and they tend to do less well with cardiac implants than younger, healthier patients.

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Susan F. Wood Internship



We are proud to announce the Susan Wood Internship on Women's Health, named in honor of Dr. Wood's many accomplishments as a leader in Congress, U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, FDA, and faculty at George Washington University. We thank her many friends and admirers for supporting this internship!

Is *there someone you would like to honor? Internships and fellowships provide training that can result in a lifetime of good work. Honor a loved one through a donation of $5,000 or more. For more information, contact us at info@center4research.org.*

National Center for Health Research

Cancer Prevention and Treatment Fund (our largest program)
1001 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20036
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Website: www.center4research.org
Cancer Hotline: info@stopcancerfund.org

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Do you know a child who would like to play here? Does this playground look like it could increase a child's chances of developing ADHD, obesity, asthma, or cancer? Find out more inside, on pages 1 and 3.

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Cancer Prevention and Treatment Fund

We don't accept funding from drug companies so you can rely on our accurate and unbiased help to prevent and treat cancer.



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