

2015 MONTANA STATE POLICY SUCCESSES

Cancer has become one of the most preventable and increasingly curable life-threatening diseases – but only if we take the steps necessary to prevent it outright, detect it early, and improve access to care. To this end, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) in Montana worked with partners to achieve the following administrative and legislative policy successes to advance our mission to end cancer as a major health problem.

Prevention, Treatment, and Survivorship

- **More Funding for Colorectal Cancer Screening** – Screening can prevent colorectal cancers by allowing for the detection and removal of precancerous polyps. Screening also offers the opportunity to detect cancer early, before symptoms appear, which usually results in less extensive treatment and better outcomes. For the FY16/FY17 biennium the Legislature increased funding for the Colorectal Cancer Screening program by \$300,000. This will allow up to 600 low-income Montanans to be screened for colorectal cancer.
- **More Funding for Obesity Prevention** – One-quarter to one-third of all cancers are tied to poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and excess weight. The Legislature increased biennium funding for the evidence-based obesity prevention program by \$200,000 so that more communities will have access to this program.
- **Better External Review** -- External review is a formal process for patients to request their health insurance issuer to reconsider its decision to deny payment for treatment or services. ACS CAN supports external review as it protects consumers by ensuring they receive fair treatment through their right to appeal when a health plan denies coverage for a specific treatment or service. This year the Legislature passed a bill that will strengthen this external review process by requiring issuers to establish a plan, stick to a timeline for review, and use impartial Independent Review Boards when a denial is being challenged.

Access to Quality Care

- **Access to Care for 70,000 Low-Income, Uninsured Montanans** – Inadequate access to timely, quality health care coverage is one of the greatest barriers to winning the war on cancer. ACS CAN supports state legislation and regulations which seek to achieve adequate, accessible, available, affordable, and administratively simple health insurance coverage for all without regard to health status or risk. New health care coverage options could include using available federal funds to cover low-income, uninsured Montanans through our state Medicaid program or by covering them through private insurance coverage — thereby increasing the likelihood that diseases like cancer will be found at their earliest stages where treatment can be less costly and health outcomes greatly improved.
- **Lower Out-of-Pocket Costs for Specialty Tier Drugs** – Cancer patients often need expensive drugs for treatment and symptom management that are placed in a health plan's specialty drug tier. In 2014, the Commissioner of Securities and Insurance (CSI) received complaints that some health plans were being discriminatory because the plan would charge a low, pre-deductible copayment for lower drug tiers, but require coinsurance as much as 50% to 90% of the cost for those drugs in the specialty tier. ACS CAN and other patient advocacy groups brought this concern to the



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Commissioner's attention. The CSI determined that certain plans were discriminatory based on state nondiscrimination law, and required that cost-sharing for all drug tiers be reasonably graduated. Insurers changed their out-of-pocket drug cost policies to comply.

Lung Cancer and Tobacco Control

- **More Funding for Tobacco Prevention and Control** – ACS CAN continues to work to increase funding for the evidence-based Montana Tobacco Use Prevention Program (MTUPP) as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Montana has made significant headway; there was a 40% reduction in youth tobacco use between 2000 and 2013. More needs to be done to educate the public about the serious health risks associated with tobacco use, support efforts to prevent youth from starting to use tobacco, and provide resources to people seeking to quit using tobacco products. This year the Legislature increased funding for the biennium by \$2 million so the program can provide comprehensive tobacco prevention and cessation services to help more youth and smokers.

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ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard. For more information, visit acscan.org.