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## **Save Lives - Restore Cancer Research Funding Now**

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The week before last, millions of Americans were captivated by a six-hour documentary on PBS that gave us an intimate look at cancer. "Ken Burns Presents CANCER: THE EMPEROR OF ALL MALADIES, a Film by Barak Goodman" poignantly documents mankind's epic struggle to cope with cancer and highlights some of the scientific insights, in areas such as immunology, that have led to new and more lasting treatments. Today, there are nearly 14.5 million cancer survivors in the U.S. – living proof of progress. Two-thirds of cancer patients survive five years or longer after being diagnosed; 40 years ago, only half the patients made it that far.

You are probably familiar with the sad statistics: 1 in 2 men, 1 in 3 women and 1 in 300 children in the U.S. will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetimes. We know these losses personally: between the two of us, we have lost a mother, a father, and close friends and colleagues. Other relatives and friends are struggling with the disease now, including a 3-year-old with brain cancer.

Advances in treatments and survival rates vary greatly. While the five-year survival rate for all breast cancers has reached a remarkable 89%, the comparable survival rate for pancreatic cancer is just 6%. The rates for other cancers fall everywhere along a broad continuum.

With so much work left to do, why has the federal government allowed spending on cancer research to stagnate? The largest single source of cancer research funding in the country is the National Cancer Institute, a unit of the National Institutes of Health. Adjusted for inflation, NCI has suffered a cumulative loss of \$10 billion in research money since 2003. That is appalling. The biology of cancer may be vastly complex, but the funding equation is simple: the more we spend on research, the more lives we will save and the quicker we will save them.

And the need is expanding. Keep in mind that the number of Americans who will be diagnosed with cancer is growing substantially, particularly among the aging Baby Boomer population. By 2030 there will likely be more than 2.1 million cancer diagnoses annually, compared with 1.66 million cancer diagnoses this year. Nor is cancer biding its time waiting for us to solve it. Cancer is a crafty and cunning adversary that has been evolving for many centuries to overcome therapies we develop to fight it.

At Stand Up To Cancer (SU2C), we are proud of the fact that more than \$370 million has been pledged to support groundbreaking cancer research since we launched in 2008. Other non-profit organizations are also doing wonderful work in combating cancer and unraveling its mysteries, supported by generous donations from individuals, foundations, and corporations, among other sources. (SU2C has collaborated with many of them in forming Dream Teams). Truly outstanding research is being done across the country and around the world. But we need to do much more.

Thanks to the incredible work of the scientists and physicians shown in the film and many, many others like them, we are indeed getting closer to that day we dream about when all cancer patients become cancer survivors. Yet the fact remains that to achieve that dream, we need an investment in research and innovation on a scale that only the government can afford. Congress and the President must recognize the importance of providing robust Federal investments for cancer research and biomedical science at NCI and its parent agency, the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

There is a growing awareness on both sides of the political divide that it is time to restore funding for medical research. Our improving economy offers the opportunity to break out of the rigid budget constraints imposed in 2011 by making a special exception for the fight against cancer and other devastating diseases. Those budget constraints and caps were in some measure the product of political infighting. Cancer is nonpartisan. It strikes Democrats and Republicans alike. It kills people of every race, gender, and religion, both in cities and in rural America. It kills our children.

The current stream of progress against cancer can be turned into a tidal wave if we as a nation devote the right level of funding, intensity, and collaboration to the cause. If you or someone you love has been affected by this disease, we urge you to go to [www.restorefunding.org](http://www.restorefunding.org) and make your voice heard. It's time to restore the war against cancer, and end its reign as a leading cause of death.

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