

# Cancer

## Advancing Biomarker Testing in the Cancer Community

Due to advances in precision medicine, oncology care has evolved from a trial-and-error approach to one that aims to target the right treatment to the right patient at the right time.<sup>1</sup> These treatments are often guided by results of biomarker testing that can identify specific changes in cancerous cells.<sup>1</sup> The benefits of personalized medicine can only be fully realized if there is a shift toward routine biomarker testing.

To help improve testing rates, the STEP Program<sup>TM</sup> provided a total of nearly USD 375,000 to five organizations for their proposals that improve awareness and education, self-advocacy and policy improvement for biomarker testing. Proposals were evaluated by an independent external review committee comprised of experts in the fields of oncology, advocacy, and biomarker testing, as well as a health care practitioner and patient.

Funded programs include:

**GO2 Foundation** for Lung Cancer's Project PROMOTE (Precision Oncology Molecular Testing Education) - An educational campaign that aims to increase biomarker testing in the lung cancer community.

**Patient Advocate Foundation's** Patient Guide to Biomarker Testing - A guide that will increase understanding and awareness of biomarker testing across cancer types.

**Sisters Network Inc.'s** Pink Table Talk: Know Your HERstory - A multimedia campaign and online symposium to educate underserved African American breast cancer patients, caregivers, and the greater community on the importance of biomarker testing.

**The Life Raft Group's** Biomarker Testing Campaign - The campaign will launch a series of webinars and videos to promote awareness and education, as well as develop an abstract, to improve guidelines for patients with gastrointestinal stromal tumor (GIST).

**Young Survival Coalition's** Let's Get Digital - A digital toolkit about biomarker testing for young adults with breast cancer.

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## Metastatic Breast Cancer (MBC) Recipients Making a Difference

Approximately 155,000 Americans are living with MBC, a form of cancer that has spread from the breast to other parts of the body such as the brain, bones or liver.<sup>2,3</sup> At this stage, the disease is incurable and life expectancy drops dramatically.<sup>4</sup> An MBC diagnosis can be overwhelming, and people living with the disease face many unique challenges.

Through the STEP Program<sup>TM</sup>, three advocacy organizations were provided a total of USD 225,000 to support the MBC community. Proposals were evaluated by experts in psycho-oncology, nurse navigation, as well as

an MBC caregiver and expert in advocacy.

Funded programs include:

**FORCE's XRAY:** MBC (eXamining the Relevance of Articles for You: Metastatic Breast Cancer) - A resource that helps patients and their caregivers interpret media coverage of MBC research, understand the relevance of this research for their clinical care, and discuss the information with their health care providers.

**METAvivor's** MBC PREP (Metastatic Breast Cancer Patient Resource and Education Portal) - Enables patients to easily access online information specific to their MBC diagnoses to make personalized and informed choices about their health.

**Patient Advocate Foundation (PAF)'s** Financial Resource Directory for Metastatic Breast Cancer Patients - An online tool that delivers information about financial resources to patients and caregivers who are experiencing or at risk of debt crisis as a result of their MBC diagnosis.

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## Caregiving for Cancer and Blood Disorders

Approximately 44 million Americans have served as caregivers for family members and friends with chronic illnesses and conditions.<sup>5</sup> Shorter hospital stays, a shift toward increased outpatient care and treatment advances that have extended lives are placing an increased responsibility on caregivers, and the physical and emotional demands of long-term caregiving can have a major impact on health.<sup>6</sup> While some support exists for caregivers of patients with cancer and blood disorders, there is an opportunity to do more.

To help improve caregiver support for cancer and certain blood disorders,\* the STEP Program™ provided a total of USD 300,000 to six patient advocacy organizations that demonstrate innovation in navigating care and treatment, self-care and addressing the needs of specific populations.

Funded programs include:

**Cancer Support Community's** CancerSupportSource®-Caregiver - A caregiver distress screening, referral and support program that will better enable cancer caregivers to navigate care and treatment, practice self-care, and address the unique needs of their loved ones.

**FORCE's** CAREgiver FOCused Resources for Survivors and Previvors (Project CARE-FOR) - A series of new multimedia resources that will help address the specific unmet needs of caregivers from hereditary cancer families, as determined through a community needs assessment.

**Lymphoma Research Foundation's** 2021 Caregiving and Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T Cell Therapy and Lymphoma Program - Expands existing resources to better educate lymphoma patients and their caregivers about immunotherapy and CAR T cell therapy.

**Sick Cells'** Sickle Cell Disease Caregiver Help Desk - Helps identify and close the gap in current resources available to sickle cell disease caregivers to better address their unique needs.

**The Sickle Cell Foundation of Tennessee's** SCD CARE for SCD CARE - Collects, collates, analyzes and shares real-life resilience strategies from sickle cell disease caregivers to help others caring for children and young adults with the disease.

**Triage Cancer's** Navigating Access and Equality: Providing the Answers that Matter - Helps blood cancer caregivers navigate complicated financial and legal topics, including health insurance, employment rights,

financial strategies, and estate planning.

## References

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4. Breast Cancer Facts & Figures 2017-2018. American Cancer Society. <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/breast-cancer-facts-and-figures/breast-cancer-facts-and-figures-2017-2018.pdf>. Published 2017. Accessed September 12, 2019.
5. Caregiving in the U.S. Executive summary. National Alliance for Caregiving. [https://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2015\\_CaregivingintheUS\\_Executive-Summary-June-4\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2015_CaregivingintheUS_Executive-Summary-June-4_WEB.pdf). Published June 2015. Accessed July 2020.
6. Family Caregiver Alliance. Caregiving. <https://www.caregiver.org/caregiving>. Accessed July 2020.

\*Proposals focused on cancer and the following blood disorders were considered for funding: sickle cell disease (SCD), immune thrombocytopenia (ITP), aplastic anemia (AA) and thalassemia.

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