



# Strategies To Convey Accurate And Accessible Cancer Information To The Public

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People expect the American Cancer Society to be the most trusted source for information about cancer, to convene and lead, to embrace health equity, and to focus on patients and caregivers.

# Access: A Fundamental Principle

- We view access comprehensively.
  - Strive to meet and anticipate needs, including insurance coverage, affordability, navigation, transportation, and lodging
- Nothing is more strongly connected to ACS than information.
  - The public sees us as a trusted source for information about cancer.

# Meeting People Where They Are

- This demands a 360-degree approach to meeting people where they are:
  - Cancer.org
  - National Cancer Information Center: 24/7/365 call center
  - Online chat
  - Digital strategy
  - Health marketing campaigns
  - Personal guidance provided by staff and volunteers
  - Books
  - Journals

# Our Principles

1. Evidence-based
2. Comprehensive
3. Present information in a way that's easily understood
4. Recognize a cancer diagnosis places patients and caregivers under stress
5. Everyone at ACS is responsible for providing information

# 1. Our Information is Evidence-Based

- Our information is based on science – nothing is more important.
- Our content team includes two oncologists, nurses, social workers.
- We call on content experts throughout the organization.
- We have a robust collection of resources in addition to our website, including journals, books, fact sheets, and brochures.
- We acknowledge when evidence is lacking.

## 2. Our Information Offerings are Comprehensive

- We attempt to provide actionable and understandable information for every issue relevant to cancer.
- From causes of cancer, to lifestyle guidance, to screening and diagnosis, through treatment, survivorship, palliative care and end of life ... for every cancer.

## 2. We Present Information in a Way That's Easy to Understand

- We do everything we can to present complicated information in ways that are easy to understand and meet patients' and caregivers' needs.
- We are also prepared to provide higher literacy information to those who need it.
- We offer information in English and Spanish, and support some additional languages.



### 3. Diagnosis Tends to Lower Ability to Absorb Information

- A cancer diagnosis can prompt worry, anxiety, and fear.
- It tends to lower people's ability to absorb and understand information.
- Our call center staff receive extensive training before they connect with patients.
  - Training helps them remain even-keeled and present information appropriately.

## 4. Everyone at ACS is Responsible for Providing Information

- Everyone, at every level, should feel comfortable providing information and/or directing patients and caregivers to appropriate sources of answers.
- We have served as unofficial navigators for thousands of families.

# The Unique Role We Play

We have earned a great deal of trust ...

... and we work to re-earn that trust every day.

# Maintaining Trust

- ACS is seen as a truth-checker.
- Multiple departments are involved in maintaining the accuracy of our information – Content team, Cancer Control, Medical/Scientific, Legal, Communications.

# Challenges

- Causality is a particular challenge and a frequent question.
- We are often called upon to address some of the most controversial emerging cancer-related issues of the day.
- Our publicly-facing information shows up in policy debates, lawsuits, and in every type of media outlet.

# Working with the Media

- We respond to media inquiries daily – national and local.
- We ask our scientists and experts to bring their own expertise and avoid responding with “official positions.”
  - Our team engages as experts in their fields.
  - Reporters can read our position on [cancer.org](http://cancer.org), but our experts add value to their reporting.



# Working with the Media

- We view media from the “public good” lens.
  - How can we connect with the public and provide them with accurate information about cancer?
- We will respond to almost any question on any topic, but try to maintain the lens of public good.
- In the current media landscape, controversy sells papers ... and generates retweets.

# Future Challenges

1

The number of dedicated health reporters has declined.

# Future Challenges

2

People choose their news outlets based on preconceived beliefs.

# Choice of News Outlets

- Many people choose news outlets that align with their preconceived beliefs.
- ACS doesn't have access to the full range of outlets.
- Web search is key and search engine optimization is a priority.

# Future Challenges

3

Resources are always a challenge.


# Budget Constraints

- We invest more than \$30 million a year to ensure people can access the information they need.
  - Most organizations don't have this capacity, and we take this responsibility very seriously.
- Generating unrestricted dollars to support this is a priority.

# Future Challenges

4

Finding the right social media strategy is essential.



Ultimately, we recognize that even the best, most accurate information cannot overcome structural barriers to accessing high-quality care.



Increasingly, we must consider information as not just a cancer problem, but as one that requires us to address the social determinants of health more broadly.



**Thank You**