

TULSA WORLD

Letter to the Editor: Questions

BY Sheppard F. Miers Jr., Tulsa

Sunday, April 07, 2013

4/07/13 at 3:08 AM

Oklahoma's decision to accept or refuse an extension of Medicaid for low-income individuals under the Affordable Care Act or provide an alternative involves important questions. The name of the federal law contains key words. First, is it affordable for the state? Second, is care for low-income individuals' health partially paid for with state funds a good idea?

A study published in 2012 about programs that had substantially expanded Medicaid health coverage for low-income adults in three other states before enactment of the Affordable Care Act found the programs significantly reduced serious disease mortality and improved access to care and self-reported health. This indicates saving lives and avoidance of higher financial costs associated with advanced stage cancer should be expected from providing publicly funded health-care coverage for more low-income individuals who cannot afford to pay for it.

The American Cancer Society estimates more than 20,000 Oklahomans will be newly diagnosed with cancer and 7,850 Oklahomans will die from cancer in 2013. Early-stage diagnosis and treatment of cancer are recognized as providing a better opportunity for success and avoiding more serious and costly, or incurable, recurrence.

Oklahoma should find a way to make routine health care with earlier diagnosis and treatment of cancer affordable for a larger group of low-income individuals, and the state, either under federal law or a state sponsored alternative.

Editor's note: Miers is director of the Charlene Miers Foundation for Cancer Research.

TULSA WORLD

Letter to the Editor: Fight cancer

BY Sheppard F. Miers Jr., Tulsa

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1/17/12 at 3:10 AM

American Cancer Society's Cancer Facts & Figures 2012 tells us it is going to take much more to beat cancer. Although incidence has declined slightly, there will be 1,638,910 new U.S. cancer cases in 2012.

In 2012, U.S. cancer deaths will increase to 577,190 (1,500 a day; one each minute) - nearly 1 1/2 times Tulsa's population.

Personal challenge, sacrifice and, too often, tragedy is behind each number. Some scientists and advocates say there would be a more promising future if the focus of cancer research were changed. National Cancer Institute information indicates a cancer cell process called metastasis,

by which cancer tumor cells spread to other parts of the body, causes most cancer deaths. Yet, after more 40 years of the war on cancer, the complicated cause of metastasis remains unknown and generally there is no available cure.

Studying it effectively in humans is reportedly very costly and difficult. As a result, estimates indicate less than 5 percent of cancer research funding is provided to solve this deadly cancer cell mystery. Many talented and inspired scientists know the fundamental significance of the metastasis question and want to answer it. Those leading cancer research under the National Cancer Program should resolve in 2012 to put the highest priority on the life-saving discovery about metastatic cancer despite the expense and difficulties involved. And we should urge they be given and use every bit of the right science and technology needed.

Editor's note: Sheppard Miers Jr. is director of Charlene Miers Foundation for Cancer Research.

TULSA WORLD

Letter to the Editor: Major barriers

BY Sheppard F. Miers Jr., Tulsa

Sunday, October 07, 2012

Cancer research experts are speaking out about the political stalemate in Congress and pending federal budget cuts on science.

Dr. Harold Varmus, Nobel Prizewinning cancer researcher and National Cancer Institute director, spoke to the National Press Club Sept. 25. He said that despite progress, there are still major barriers to defeating cancer. That is because cancer is now known to be a set of differing and complex cellular diseases.

Finding cures, through NCI grants to top researchers, is just as complex. Genetics discovery can be converted to targeted clinical treatments of cancer by reliable and increased federal funding of research.

An American Association for Cancer Research physicians and scientists panel published a comprehensive 2012 cancer progress report calling cancer research investment a national priority. Oncologist Siddhartha Mukherjee, M. D., Pulitzer Prize-winning author on cancer, said in a Newsweek article how the premature death of Apple Inc. founder Steve Jobs from an incurable cancer showed our need for increased cancer research funding.

One in four other Americans is now expected to die of cancer.

The best minds on cancer say Congress has to spend more, not less on science to stop cancer deaths.

The Stephenson Cancer Center at the University of Oklahoma is now a premier research and clinical institution.

Federal grants help its talented scientists lead in the search for life saving discoveries. Please contact congressional officeholders and candidates. Tell them to approve major federal government funding increases for the National Cancer Institute.

Editor's note: Miers is Director of the Charlene Miers Foundation for Cancer Research.