

CANCER PREVENTION IN SOUTH CAROLINA: Will You Join the Cause?

John E. Vena, PhD

Cancer affects all of us; it has a tremendous impact on physician practices and families dealing with the many related issues that cancer raises. This special issue of *The Journal of the South Carolina Medical Association* offers you a unique opportunity to learn and then spread the word about the challenges and opportunities to tackle cancer as a clinical and public health issue in South Carolina. Primary prevention of cancer can happen through better understanding of the etiologies of these diseases. It can also occur through screening for cervical, colorectal, and oral cancers, which allows for detecting and removing or treating precancerous lesions. Secondary prevention through early diagnosis and prompt treatment can be targeted toward special populations at risk. Supportive care and tertiary prevention form an important safety net, certainly affect quality of life, and may lead to increases in disease-free survival.

This *Journal* issue presents a series of articles on the epidemiology and prevention of the seven cancers of most critical importance in South Carolina; Breast, Cervix, Colon, Esophagus, Lung, Oral Cavity, and Prostate. Data presented are from the excellent resources of the South Carolina Central Cancer Registry (SCCCR). Prior to 1996, South Carolina had no registry of new cancer cases, so there wasn't any way to grasp a better understanding of the population dynamics of the impact of cancer. The SCCCR data is certified for completeness, timeliness, and quality by the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Having participated in this certification process for seven years (since 1997, the first year it was eligible) the SCCCR has been awarded five Gold and two Silver ratings. This year the South Carolina Cancer Registry, under the leadership of Susan Bolick-Aldrich, received another Gold Certification for the quality of their work. This means that the

SC Registry is ranked as one of the best in the country and the world! I serve on the SC Cancer Prevention Advisory Board and the Cancer Surveillance Subcommittee and have observed firsthand the importance of the registry as a resource for cancer research. This special issue is yet another example.

The citizens of South Carolina can be assured that the State-wide Cancer Prevention and Control Program (CPCP), which was organized in 2003 under the leadership of Dr. James Hebert, is conducting a world-class effort aimed at reducing cancer-related health disparities and preventing cancer at all levels. Dr. Hebert and the great team of interdisciplinary scientists who have been recruited to the program have articulated a focused and targeted mission to prevent and control the leading cancers in SC. CPCP faculty members partner with physicians, concerned citizens, and state public health officials to implement a comprehensive plan to address the disparities in cancer incidence and mortality in this state. As part of that effort, the partners developed the reports that comprise this special issue. Such a comprehensive and insightful treatise with input from all the partners is indeed unique. This was repeatedly mentioned to me by the world-class scientists who served as reviewers of the articles.

I urge each of you to take the time to read this unprecedented issue, to get involved, and to spread the word to your colleagues and patients. Partners have come forward from all sectors of South Carolina who are passionate about eliminating cancer health disparities. Please support them and their efforts. Collaborate on their outreach, community education, and research activities and share and disseminate information to your patients. Working together, we can make cancer prevention in South Carolina a reality. ■

Dr. John E. Vena is a professor and chair of the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the Arnold School of Public Health in Columbia, South Carolina. Address correspondence to: Dr. Vena, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics Arnold School of Public Health University of South Carolina, 800 Sumter Street Columbia, SC 29208-0001. Email: jvena@sc.edu.