

Statement from Community Oncology Alliance Executive Director Ted Okon on the Cancer Moonshot Relaunch

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Community Oncology Alliance \(COA\)](#) applauds President Biden for his commitment to relaunching the Cancer Moonshot and the attempt to end cancer in our lifetime. It is a necessary goal as cancer remains the second leading cause of death in the United States.



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Ted Okon, COA

Even as COVID-19 has ravaged our communities, cancer has continued its deadly march, killing Americans at a steady pace.

We are encouraged that among the central planks of the Moonshot is the focus on cancer screening and on health disparities, as the two are inextricably linked. Regular cancer screenings, such as mammograms and colonoscopies, are the first line of defense against cancer, a routine practice that [research has clearly documented](#) was severely hampered during the pandemic, resulting in relatively minor cancers growing unnoticed into more severe and much more difficult to treat diseases.

The drop in screenings is why COA launched a major public health campaign – [Time to Screen](#) – with CancerCare in early 2021 to encourage all Americans, especially those in underserved communities, to resume their annual screenings in a safe, convenient location. To reach as many audiences as possible, public service messages and targeted advertisements have been developed in five languages.

The nation's community oncologists also look forward to working with the Biden Administration on addressing racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities in cancer care that were bad before the pandemic but only got worse during it, particularly in minority communities. We encourage the Cancer Moonshot to look towards independent oncology practices, often in rural and underserved communities, for the innovative solutions they are already implementing to address the serious, pernicious problem of cancer disparities.

The costs of screening and follow-up care are still daunting to many American families, but steps are being taken to remove these obstacles. A recent announcement from the Department of Labor about Affordable Care Act implementation noted that insurers are now required to cover follow-up colonoscopies after a positive non-invasive test. This is a tenant of Value-Based Insurance Design (V-BID), which is one of the commonsense strategies health services researchers have long called for and that the Administration can advance with the stroke of a pen as part of the Cancer Moonshot.

Igniting massive transformation in our health and cancer care systems requires sustained commitment from

the Federal government. We saw this firsthand with the soon-to-end Oncology Care Model (OCM), which enhanced the experience of Americans receiving cancer treatment, living with the disease, and surviving it. However, ending federal support for the single largest effort to transform cancer care in the United States without a successor plan is totally incongruous with the Moonshot's goals. We at COA have called on the Biden Administration to extend the OCM, which has done so much to improve the experience of patients facing cancer. Keeping the promise of the Cancer Moonshot requires a dedication to real action, not just a handshake and a promise.

The Cancer Moonshot relaunch has the potential to catalyze efforts to eradicate cancer, which starts with preventive screenings, knocking down barriers to care, and improving the cancer experience for all Americans. However, actions speak louder than words and the Administration's actions need to be in concert, not inconsistent, with the ambitious goals of the Cancer Moonshot 2.0. COA stands ready to make the relaunch a success.

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