

EDITORIAL

TACKLING CANCER AS WE DID WITH COVID19: A GLOBAL CHALLENGE THAT NEEDS A COOPERATIVE EFFORT

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While the world is still facing the COVID19 pandemic, this year start with some good news for what concerns cancer care. On February 2nd 2022, right before another successful World Cancer day that is increasing awareness on all cancer-related themes, US President Joe Biden relaunched the "Moonshot" initiative against cancer, with the aim of reducing the mortality rate by at least 50% over the next 25 years and improving the lives of patients and their families.

The first Moonshot initiative was promoted in 2016 by Barack Obama, who entrusted the mission to Joe Biden (his Vice at the time) as commander of the fight against cancer.

The initiative was named Moonshot after the speech by John F. Kennedy, in which he said: *"We choose to go to the Moon not because it is easy, but because it is difficult"*. Indeed, setting difficult goals helps to bring the best energies into play and choose which battle to fight, which to postpone, which to win. The Moonshot relaunched in February 2022 is calling on the private sector, founda-

tions, academic institutions, healthcare providers, and all citizens to participate (see <https://www.whitehouse.gov/cancermoonshot/>) sharing ideas, setting priorities and pushing for progress. The programme focuses on a wide range of aspects aiming to create a cancer immunotherapy network; to examine why the implemented strategies are effective for some patients and not for others; identify ways to overcome cancer resistance to treatments; build a nationwide cancer data system for researchers, doctors, and patients; encourage research on childhood cancer; reduce the side effects caused by current cancer treatments; ensure early detection and prevention strategies; use precision medicine and build 3D maps to help researchers understand how cells interact and evolve into cancer; finally, to develop new technologies and treatments for cancer.

"It's bold, it's ambitious, but it's absolutely doable; just as we have used size to develop cutting-edge vaccines and treatments against COVID19, we will bring a strong sense of urgency to the fight against cancer".

With these words President Biden paves the way for the application of the criteria of urgency, the analogy of feasibility and interconnection to the battle against cancer.

The pandemic showed us that working together toward the same goal, pooling ideas, sharing information, studies, and solutions in science works. The collaboration between states, scientists, doctors at the forefront in a single whole, represented the winning strategy.

By applying this logic to cancer, we will be able to lay the foundations, in the near future, of a reality in which sharing could make a difference. Cancer is also an “emergency”, so it should be treated in the same way as COVID19.

The goal is to cure cancer, make it manageable, lengthen and improve the lives of patients, act for prevention, make early diagnoses.

By analogically applying the thrust received in the pandemic, the urgency and the interconnec-

tions between minds and studies, establishing the search for a common strategy as a global priority, it will also be possible to identify a possible solution for the “cancer emergency”.

At present, the funding scheme of the renewed Moonshot programme is not clear yet, but it is expected to be disclosed soon^{1, 2}.

While we expect much progress stemming from this initiative, we all, as scientists and doctors, as patients or relatives of cancer patients, as citizens as well, should make an effort to promote anticancer strategies starting from our own selves. For example, we are still lagging behind in applying prevention strategies that have been officially formalized long ago (see for example the European code against cancer: <https://cancer-code-europe.iarc.fr/index.php/en/>). We all should promote healthier lifestyle habits and policies to safeguard the environment. The war against cancer should be everyone everyday battle.

REFERENCES

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