

Cancer Moonshot Announces New Program to Develop More Precise Cancer Surgery

Precision Surgical Interventions program aims to enable surgeons to successfully remove cancer in a single operation.

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As Part of President Biden's Unity Agenda, Cancer Moonshot Announces Launch of New ARPA-H Program to Develop Novel Technologies for More Precise and Accurate Cancer Tumor Removal

Today [July 27], the Biden Cancer Moonshot announced a first-of-its-kind Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) program to develop novel technologies that will allow surgeons to remove cancerous tumors with more precision and accuracy, resulting in better health outcomes for Americans facing cancer.

The launch of this program—ARPA-H's first program targeting cancer and second program overall—represents a major milestone for ARPA-H, the new agency President Biden established and funded with Democrats and Republicans in Congress last year to generate breakthroughs in ways to prevent, detect, and treat cancer and other diseases.

This historic program will accelerate progress toward the goals set by the President and First Lady for the Cancer Moonshot: cutting the cancer death rate in half—preventing more than 4 million cancer deaths by 2047—and improving the experience of cancer patients, as well as their families and caregivers. It will also advance the President's Unity Agenda, which is focused on areas that unite Americans, including ending cancer as we know it today.

As part of his Unity Agenda last year, President Biden called on Congress to establish and fund ARPA-H to drive breakthroughs in cancer and other diseases. He has since delivered results—working with Congress on a bipartisan basis to invest \$2.5 billion in ARPA-H, leading, in part, to this new program.

Surgical procedures are often the first treatment option for the approximately 2 million Americans diagnosed with cancer each year. However, current surgical technologies do not allow doctors to easily and fully distinguish cancer cells from normal surrounding tissue in the operating room. This

can lead to repeat surgeries, a more difficult recovery, and cancer recurrence, as well as higher health care costs.

ARPA-H's new Precision Surgical Interventions (PSI) program aims to deliver groundbreaking new tools to enable surgeons to successfully remove cancer for patients through a single operation by better identifying and differentiating between healthy and cancer tissue. Technologies developed through this program will also help surgeons spot and avoid important structures such as nerves, blood vessels, and lymph nodes, which can be mistakenly damaged during invasive surgical procedures.

In alignment with the Biden Cancer Moonshot and to advance equity, the PSI program is designed to ensure emerging technologies are accessible in rural and urban areas, improving health outcomes for all Americans facing cancer.

Through a Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) for the PSI program, ARPA-H will solicit proposals for methods and techniques to improve visibility of cancer and other critical anatomical structures during surgery. ARPA-H's PSI BAA will solicit proposals focused on cancer localization and healthy structure localization.

Recognizing that there is likely more than one ambitious solution to this tough challenge, multiple awards under this BAA are anticipated and resources available will depend on the quality of the proposals received and the availability of funds. To ensure the devices can be readily adopted in the real world, awardees will consult with surgeons and ARPA-H on usability. A Proposers Day for interested research teams is scheduled for September 7, 2023, in Chicago, Illinois.

In addition, the Biden-Harris Administration is delivering progress in the fight against cancer for service members and veterans with new steps through bipartisan action:

- Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that veterans who were exposed to burn pits and other toxins during their service are now eligible for breast cancer risk assessments and clinically appropriate mammograms at VA. Veterans are eligible for these screenings regardless of age, symptoms, family history, and whether they are enrolled in VA health care. This step marks progress on implementing the SERVICE Act and advances President Biden's Unity Agenda by supporting veterans and driving progress toward the goals of the Biden Cancer Moonshot and its efforts to expand access to cancer screenings, so more Americans can catch cancer early, when outcomes are best.
- On Tuesday, VA announced that it will conduct a scientific review to determine whether there is a relationship between three conditions—acute leukemias, chronic leukemias, and multiple

myeloma outside of the head and neck—and toxic exposures for service members who deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Uzbekistan, and Southwest Asia. This review is a part of the Biden-Harris Administration’s efforts under the Honoring our PACT Act to expand benefits and services for toxic-exposed veterans and their families. This action will also deliver on the Biden Cancer Moonshot goals to understand exposures to toxins, and to prevent cancer before it starts.

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