

Very Public Disclosures

Olivia Munn and Francis Collins, MD, PhD, candidly discussed their cancer diagnoses

June 10, 2024 By [Trent Straube](#)

You could say Francis Collins, MD, PhD, talks the talk and walks the walk. In an April 12 op-ed in *The Washington Post*, the former director of the National Institutes of Health disclosed he had aggressive prostate cancer.

He wrote: “Why am I going public about this cancer that many men are uncomfortable talking about? Because I want to lift the veil and share lifesaving information, and I want all men to benefit from the medical research to which I’ve devoted my career and that is now guiding my care.”

Collins shared that he had been on “active surveillance” for a slow-growing prostate cancer for five years, a common scenario. Indeed, 40% of men over 65 have low-grade prostate cancer (many never know it, and few develop advanced disease). During this time, he wrote, “to contribute to knowledge and receive expert care, I enrolled in a clinical trial at the National Institutes of Health, the agency I led from 2009 through late 2021.”

He has since undergone a radical prostatectomy (removal of the entire prostate gland). “While there are no guarantees,” he wrote, “my doctors believe I have a high likelihood of being cured by the surgery.”

In other headline-making disclosures, actress Olivia Munn, 43, shared via social media and then a *People* magazine cover story that last year she was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a double mastectomy. She used the spotlight to raise awareness of the screening tool that led to her diagnosis.

“I wouldn’t have found my cancer for another year—at my next scheduled mammogram—except that my ob-gyn...decided to calculate my Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Score,” Munn wrote on Instagram. “I hope by sharing this it will help others find comfort, inspiration and support.”

