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National Minority Cancer Awareness Week, 1987

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The month of April, a season of renewal and hope, is a most appropriate time in which to discuss good news about cancer prevention and treatment. Major advances in our understanding of this disease provide encouragement both to patients and to medical and scientific professionals. More Americans are surviving cancer longer than ever before—more than half of those diagnosed as having cancer live 5 years or longer—and they are able to lead more active lives than before.

This is good news indeed, but the fight continues. An area of special concern is that high cancer rates continue to exist among members of some minority groups. We must keep on circulating information throughout society, supporting research into reasons for these rates, and making sure that we as individuals and families take the initiative to become informed and to act on everything learned from years of discovery and progress.

Cancer strikes minority groups in many ways. Cancer incidence and mortality are higher for blacks than for whites, while survival rates are lower and diagnosis during the early, localized, most treatable stages of cancer is less frequent. Black men are particularly vulnerable, but black women have high rates of lung and cervical cancer. The incidence of lung, stomach, prostate, and esophageal cancer is higher for blacks than for others. Cancer rates for Hawaiian males and females top those of other Americans. Some forms of cancer, particularly of the stomach, are higher in Hispanics than in other ethnic groups.

The Federal government is supporting research into causes of these situations. Health planners are proposing new prevention programs. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) is training minority professionals to work in cancer prevention and stepping up its efforts to inform and educate members of minority groups about cancer.

We have learned a great deal about causes of cancer. A change of diet to include more fiber and less fat will help reduce the estimated 35 percent of cancer deaths that are related to what we eat. This is because diets low in fiber and high in fats appear to increase the risk of cancers of the colon, prostate, breast, and uterine lining. Other changes can also reduce the risk of cancer. Examples of two areas are cigarette smoking, which causes an estimated 85 percent of all lung cancer, and high alcohol intake, which increases the risk of esophageal cancer.

The more we educate ourselves and others, and the more we continue to support all fronts of the battle against cancer, the more headway we will make for members of minority groups and for all Americans.

The Congress, by House Joint Resolution 119, has designated the week of April 19 through April 25, 1987, as "National Minority Cancer Awareness Week" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week of April 19 through April 25, 1987, as National Minority Cancer Awareness Week. I call upon public officials at all levels; members of the medical and health professions; business, religious, and civic groups and leaders; and the communications media to join this special effort to help minority Americans take advantage of new knowledge to conquer cancer. I especially urge each American, young and old, to take a new look at this disease and help reduce the toll it takes on us all.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 19th day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eleventh.

Ronald Reagan