

IN EVERY ISSUE

# Message from the Editor

BY VINAY JAIN, MD

*New statistics are promising, but more is needed.*

Well, the numbers are out from the American Cancer Society and they are good—and bad, depending on how you read them. Overall, cancer deaths declined in 2003 over the previous year for the first time in 70 years, which is good news if you are male. The statistics actually showed an increase of 409 in women and a decrease of 778 in men, resulting in a net decrease of 369. The actual death rate from all cancers combined has been dropping since 1991, but since the numbers are adjusted for size and age of population, it took until 2003 for the decrease to become large enough to show an actual reduction.

So, while we celebrate the first overall decrease in cancer deaths since cancer statistics began to be collected in 1930, we need to look below the surface at some other facts.

- > The ACS estimates 1,399,790 new cases of cancer in 2006 and 564,830 deaths.
- > Lung cancer will account for an estimated 162,460 cancer deaths in 2006.
- > Tobacco use continues to cause the highest number of cancer deaths (170,000 deaths a year), but progress has been made in stopping the habit and preventing young people from starting. (The complete Cancer Facts & Figures 2006 report can be found at [www.cancer.org/statistics](http://www.cancer.org/statistics).)

We applaud the drop in deaths, but with the knowledge that much more needs to be done to keep this disease from continuing its destructive march. In this issue you can read about advances that may be part of the next positive statistic.

This issue begins with some exciting news about a drug that may greatly impact the survival rate for a certain type of breast cancer. Of the estimated 212,920 breast cancer cases this year, around 25 percent of those patients will be able to take Herceptin, a drug that is remarkably successful in preventing recurrence in women whose tumors produce an overabundance of HER2. Identifying faulty genes means new targeted approaches to individual cancers that reflect cancer treatment of the future.

You'll also read about advancements in kidney cancer on the heels of two recent drug approvals as well as how to navigate the new [Medicare Part D](#) drug coverage plan. Another feature solidifies the term "[co-survivor](#)" in the cancer lexicon. The term, used in other diseases, took hold last year when the Susan G. Komen Breast

Cancer Foundation created a recognition program for those who travel with patients through diagnosis, treatment and recovery.

Editor-at-large Kathy LaTour looks at survivors and co-survivors for whom cancer served as a catalyst for a change in their lives, while in another article she applies her own experiences to help patients and survivors handle the pressure to remain positive. Staff writer Elizabeth Whittington looks into the reasons behind [chronic pain](#) and how to get relief, and a daughter takes us with her to the [waiting room](#) where she waited while her father received treatment.

We are excited to announce there will be a special fifth edition of *CURE* this summer as we partner with the Lance Armstrong Foundation for a look at survivorship.