



One Year After the March

What Effect did it have?

Donna Doneski

To cite this article: Donna Doneski (2000) One Year After the March, *Oncology Issues*, 15:2, 36-36, DOI: [10.1080/10463356.2000.11905121](https://doi.org/10.1080/10463356.2000.11905121)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10463356.2000.11905121>



Published online: 17 Oct 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1



View related articles [↗](#)



One Year After THE MARCH

What effect did it have?

by Donna Doneski

THE MARCH...Coming Together to Conquer CancerSM of 1998, spearheaded by the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship (NCCS), may have been a once-in-a-lifetime event. On that September 25 and 26, some 200,000 participants gathered on The National Mall in Washington, D.C., and another million Americans rallied at 200 events in all 50 states. The message was simple: NO MORE CANCER. For the first time, cancer survivors, researchers, caregivers, community leaders, scientists, families, and friends from across the country united in a massive demonstration to demand that the Cause, the Care, and the Cure of cancer be America's top research and health care priorities.

Tens of thousands of individuals and scores of organizations contributed to the overall success of this nationwide campaign. It was led most notably by NCCS Executive Director Ellen Stovall; the campaign's honorary chair and cancer survivor, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf; and underwriting sponsor and CEO of the Jones Apparel Group, Sidney Kimmel. With enthusiastic endorsement from the patient advocacy community, The March united an unprecedented 1,100 diverse organizations reaching out to labor and educators, civil rights organizations, women's groups, environmental coalitions, and a variety of religious organizations.

Donna Doneski served as director of community operations for THE MARCH...Coming Together To Conquer CancerSM. She is director of communications for the National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship in Silver Spring, Md.

Thousands joined The March at the local level. And together, The March captured national attention.

So, what has happened since September 26, 1998? Did The March achieve its goals?

Increased funding for cancer research was one of The March's objectives. Just days following the historic rally, Congress voted a 16 percent increase in funding for cancer research—\$2.9 billion for the National Cancer Institute—its largest increase in cancer research funding ever. But that victory was short-lived. By January, President Clinton's State of the Union address called for only a 2.1 percent increase in funding for cancer research. That is why organizers of The March encouraged ongoing grassroots involvement.

Another goal of The March was to get advances in research to people. To achieve this, The March would need to articulate the complex sets of issues around improving access to clinical trials and quality cancer care. These issues received some attention during The March, but would not truly surface until the spring of 1999 and the ensuing debate over patients' rights.

Taking leadership on behalf of the Administration, Vice President Al Gore outlined his five-point cancer agenda at the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center in San Diego, Calif., on June 28, 1999. Describing his plan, the Vice President said, "We must set a national goal: to work tirelessly toward a vision of a 21st Century America that is free of cancer as the killer it is today." By calling for passage of important clinical trials legislation, the Vice President acknowledged the efforts of more than three years of work by members of the Cancer Leadership Council and others in the advocacy community.

Meanwhile on Capitol Hill, a concentrated and coordinated advocacy effort among patient groups, and other advocates from the cancer community led to progress on the Patients' Bill of Rights. The House of Representatives passed the Norwood-Dingell version of the Patients' Bill of Rights on October 7, 1999. Passage of this bill by Congress is a victory for cancer patients, especially since it includes access to high-quality cancer clinical trials.

Better funding and legislative changes are important outcomes of The March, but its success also can be measured by the empowerment of individuals and in the numbers of opportunities it created for disparate groups to work together in new ways. Having a goal—an event such as The March in which the entire community could participate—created a sense of urgency and a palpable need for even greater inter-organizational collaboration.

That spirit of cooperation continues today. Cancer survivorship is an integral part of the work being done in oncology practice, in cancer research, and in patient advocacy. And 18 months after The March, the cancer community carries on the efforts begun with that campaign.

On September 25, 1999, on the one-year anniversary of The March, NCCS held Rays of HopeSM national candlelight vigil. Once again, people from more than 38 states and 13 countries came together and called attention to the long war against cancer.

The NCCS invites you to stand vigil at Rays of Hope 2000 on September 23 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Because—together—we can make the kinds of changes none of us can make alone. Visit NCCS's web site at www.cansearch.org.