



## Lance Armstrong's New Cancer Fight Goes Global

September 24, 2010 · 8:30 am PDT



LANCE ARMSTRONG

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**When we think of what the developing world needs in terms of aid and health, cancer ranks low on most people's lists. But with cancer rates—and cancer deaths—skyrocketing in poor countries, shouldn't it be higher on our to-do list? Yes, says Lance.**

When a parent is lost to cancer in the developing world, it often means no school for the kids, no food on the table, and a future in which the only certainty is poverty. In 2010, we'll lose 8 million people as this disease quietly becomes the world's leading cause of death for the first time ever. By 2030, that toll is projected to rise to 17 million in the developing world alone as populations increase. That's roughly the equivalent of the entire populations of Los Angeles, Houston, and Chicago combined. A health crisis of epic proportions is descending upon the developing world—and not enough is being done to turn that tide.

Just 40 years ago, only 15 percent of cancer deaths occurred in developing nations. A combination of environmental factors and an increase in identifying cancer cases in poor countries has seen this number rise dramatically. And today, these countries are catching up in a tragic way: More than half of the people newly diagnosed with cancer—and two-thirds of those destined to lose their lives as a result of the disease—live in the developing world.

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Public health experts point to better control of infectious diseases, population growth and aging, and lifestyle changes as factors leading to the sudden increase in cancer rates—a trend expected to continue in coming decades. Despite these grim projections, this crisis is just now beginning to rise to the top of the global health agenda. LIVESTRONG, with the help of some great partners, hopes to shine a light on the people affected by this disease and provide solutions that save lives.

We began in 2008 at the Annual Meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative by committing to make cancer a global priority. Through CGI, I met Felicia Knaul, director of the Harvard Global Equity Initiative. With other partners—including Paul Farmer, founder of Partners in Health, Julio Frenk, dean of the Harvard School of Public Health, and Dr. Lawrence Shulman of the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute—we have launched a global task force that aims to improve cancer care in the developing world. Princess Dina Mired of Jordan and I are honored to be co-presidents with this group of cancer and global health experts.

The goals of our task force are to raise awareness in developing nations about the basics of prevention and early detection, and to bring affordable and accessible treatments to poor countries. Tragically, people are dying at an alarming rate from cancers that are largely preventable or treatable. For too long, the assumption that cancers are too expensive or too complex to treat in poor countries has gone unchallenged. We hope to change that and to enlist others in our cause.

We will focus on expanding access to existing vaccines, early detection, and treatment of cancers where cure and major improvements in life expectancy are likely, and pain control to reduce human suffering. The Task Force will work with local partners (including governments and local hospitals) to create cancer care programs, beginning in five pilot nations: Haiti, Rwanda, Malawi, Jordan, and Mexico. We will be providing treatment, offering expert consultations, providing access to pathology reports free of charge, and offering social support for survivors and their families. We will create models that can be replicated in developing nations across the globe.

*Surviving cancer should not be an accident of geography.*

An important lesson of the past few decades is that there is hope. Public-private partnerships, new ways of thinking about financing and procurement, and other innovations have literally saved millions of lives—and many more can be saved if we apply what we've learned in the AIDS fight to cancer.

Dina Mired says that surviving cancer should not be an accident of geography. We know what works against this disease. While our task force is a step in the right direction, no single initiative can solve this problem alone. It's time for solidarity and collective action by governments and world health organizations.

*Illustration by Junyi Wu*

*Lance Armstrong is a cycling champion, cancer survivor and founder of LIVESTRONG. He will be reporting on LIVESTRONG's progress in the global fight against cancer at this year's Clinton Global Initiative in September.*