Trump Claims Credit for Cancer Decline That Happened Before He Took Office

The American Cancer Society sets the record straight.

January 10, 2020 By Bob Barnett

The latest statistics from the American Cancer Society were decidedly positive. As Cancer Health reported, "Cancer Deaths See Biggest Decline Ever."

So positive, it appears, that the president of the United States decided to take some credit for it on Twitter: "U.S. Cancer Death Rate Lowest In Recorded History! A lot of good news coming out of this Administration."

Fact: The good news happened before he took office, according to Gary M. Reedy, chief executive officer of the American Cancer Society and American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, as reported by CNN.

"The mortality trends reflected in our current report, including the largest drop in overall cancer mortality ever recorded from 2016 to 2017, reflect prevention, early detection and treatment advances that occurred in prior years," Reedy said in a written statement.

Donald Trump was inaugurated on January 20, 2017.

There were a few other issues with the claim. One is that the White House has consistently attempted to cut funding for the National Institutes of Health, including substantial cuts to the National Cancer Institute. Fortunately, the final budget that Congress approved, and the President signed, allowed for increases.

As Reedy stated, "Since taking office, the president has signed multiple spending bills that have included increases in funding for cancer research at the National Institutes of Health and National Cancer Institute—though the impact of those increases are not reflected in the data contained in this report."

Another issue is the repeated attempts by the White House to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA, or Obamacare) or declare it to be unconstitutional, a matter still being debated in the courts. A growing body of evidence has found that access to insurance, especially the ACA, has led to better outcomes for people with cancer, including nearly eradicating racial disparities for several types of

the malignancy.

According to Reedy, “The administration has an opportunity to significantly impact future declines in both cancer incidence and mortality by increasing access to comprehensive health care, supporting robust and sustained increases in federal funding for cancer research and passing and implementing evidence-based tobacco control policies.”

None of this detracts from the positive news about the decline in cancer deaths, of course. As Charles Fuchs, MD, MPH, director of the Yale Cancer Center in New Haven, Connecticut, told CNN, "The bottom line is that this report is great news.… This report demonstrates extraordinary progress in our battle against cancer in terms of detection, improving treatment, improving mortality, improving screening technologies.”

To read the CNN story, click here.

To read the American Cancer Society’s annual report, click here.

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