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How is the American Institute for Cancer Research working to advance the Food as Medicine movement?

The American Institute for Cancer Research's (AICR) vision is to live in a world where no one develops a preventable cancer. We fund cutting-edge research and give people practical tools and information to help them prevent – and survive – cancer. We are regarded as the global authority on the links between diet/nutrition and physical activity as they relate to cancer risk and cancer survivorship outcomes. In fact, although we did not call it such, AICR has been

advocating for food as medicine for over 40 years!

While you cannot change your age or your genes, there *are* modifiable risk factors for cancer at the population health level. Research shows that dietary patterns/nutrition (e.g., food as medicine) and physical activity can make a big difference, both to cancer risk and survivorship. For example, it's well known that poor nutrition and little physical activity contribute to obesity, and our research shows that obesity – which currently affects nearly 1/3 of all US adults – is a strong risk factor for 13 different types of cancer.

AICR is working to advance the food as medicine movement by bringing four decades of research on nutrition and cancer risk to many audiences, including researchers, clinicians, policymakers, cancer survivors and the general public. We will continue to champion the latest global cancer research regarding diet, weight and

physical activity, so that we can help people make informed lifestyle choices to reduce their cancer risk and improve outcomes after diagnosis.

What are some specific steps AICR is taking?

AICR contributes to the body of evidence that supports food as medicine as a movement. We have two annual research grant programs – our traditional [Investigator-Initiated Research Grant Program](#)⁽¹⁾ and our new [INSPIRE Research Challenge](#)⁽²⁾ (which funds bold, innovative and creative ideas from early career researchers).

Findings from our research on nutrition, weight and cancer risk are added to our [Global Cancer Update Program](#)⁽³⁾ (“CUP Global”) database, which catalogues the global literature on diet, nutrition, physical activity and cancer (both risk and survivorship). CUP Global contains the

curated research results from more than 12,000 papers on cancer prevention and survival, which have been synthesized and critiqued by nearly 150 scientists. It has resulted in actionable evidence-based advice for [17 types of cancer](#)⁽⁴⁾.

Information from CUP Global allows us to develop evidence-based consumer resources, including print brochures, downloadable fact sheets, nutritious recipes and online challenges. One example is our award-winning [Healthy10 Challenge](#)⁽⁵⁾, which helps users eat better and move more as part of a free 10-week online program. Another example is our award-winning [Cancer Health Check](#)⁽⁶⁾, which guides users through a free two-minute online lifestyle assessment with immediate results that show how closely aligned (or not) the user’s lifestyle is with the cancer prevention evidence base. Many of our tools and recipes are also available in [Spanish](#)⁽⁷⁾.

AICR also contributes to and advances six

key federal [policy priorities](#)⁽⁸⁾ that are important for helping people make informed choices to reduce their cancer risk and improve cancer survival. They include supporting:

- (1) Nutrition labels that promote informed choices
- (2) Alcohol labels that educate about the alcohol-cancer connection
- (3) Federal dietary guidelines that are aligned with cancer prevention research
- (4) Federal guidelines for physical activity programs and policies
- (5) Federal funding for cancer research, with an emphasis on prevention and healthy lifestyles
- (6) Access to diet, physical activity and weight loss interventions for people with cancer and for cancer survivors.

Finally, AICR is an active member in a variety of professional coalitions and working groups, and attends national and

international conferences to share the food as medicine message. We are also members of CancerX, the public-private partnership announced by the White House to boost innovation in the fight against cancer as part of the reignited Cancer Moonshot.

What are you looking forward to at the Food as Medicine Policy Summit?

I attended this summit in May 2023 and left feeling so inspired. It was a great event and I'm looking forward to seeing familiar faces and meeting new people too. Food as medicine is growing and bringing together an even wider variety of stakeholders (industry, providers, payers and more), so it's a particularly exciting time for this summit. I'm looking forward to learning new approaches and best practices, and reflecting on legacy approaches and lessons learned. I'm also honored to be chairing and speaking at this summit.