

The Board of Directors of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) wrote to the members of the US Congress urging them to act quickly to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic: «Time is of the essence, and we call on you and your colleagues in Congress to move swiftly forward to take the following steps to alleviate the COVID-19 public health emergency, while also ensuring patients with cancer are protected and the cancer workforce remains vibrant» they wrote in an [open letter sent on 30 March](#).

✘ The [open letter](#) urged to «accelerate the manufacture of all the crucial medical equipment desperately needed to protect our frontline healthcare providers» and to «implement widespread testing of symptomatic individuals immediately, as well as asymptomatic individuals who have been exposed to infection or those in high-risk patient groups such as patients with cancer. Testing and tracking the novel coronavirus are vital measures to understanding the spread of COVID-19 in our communities, which will allow us to better isolate identified cases and contain the infection clusters that are present».

But, «testing alone is not sufficient» the AACR board warned. «A deidentified, national central database should be established immediately to track novel coronavirus positive cases and those who are antibody positive, i.e., who have been exposed to the virus and developed immunity».

The letter also recommended to keep a nationwide social distancing policy in place for as long as necessary: «Pulling back or even pausing our social distancing efforts prematurely would likely result in tens of thousands of additional cases and overwhelm our healthcare system. It is imperative that current social distancing policies be extended as required to end this national emergency».

Concerning treatments, the AACR recommends to uphold the rigorous, science-based approach of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in its approval of all COVID-19 therapies, to encourage the use of the FDA's expanded access program, based on compassionate use, «as the primary pathway for patients to access investigational medical products», and to invest in the telehealth digital infrastructure and technology needed to ensure continuity of care for patients with cancer.

«Your leadership and support over the past several decades have ensured the development of a highly effective National Cancer Program that can now apply its unique and substantive knowledge and skills to help society defeat this virulent pathogen» the open letter concluded. «We recognize the need to take action immediately to vanquish this virus that threatens the lives of millions of Americans, ravages our economy, and derails scientific progress. Otherwise, our healthcare system will fail and our most vulnerable patients, including those with cancer, will disproportionately suffer».