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Cancer.com Site Sat Dormant for 10 Years. Now It's Live Again.

— Janssen Biotech gives it new life, but will it provide useful info?

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After lying moribund for the past 10 years, the website cancer.com is now online and full of content.

Now the question is, with Janssen Biotech finally filling out the site, will it genuinely help patients navigate through their respective cancer journeys or steer them to the company's products? And will its similarity to cancer.org, the American Cancer Society's (ACS) flagship site, cause confusion?

The look-alike sites are reminiscent of [another situation](#) almost a decade ago, when the for-profit Livestrong.com was created in cooperation with the former Lance Armstrong Foundation's (now Livestrong Foundation) not-for-profit Livestrong.org site. In the case of cancer.com, the ACS is a partner (albeit one of many) in providing content for the site.

ACS officials familiar with the matter told *MedPage Today* that they were personally surprised that the society didn't already own the cancer.com domain, as ACS had made a point of acquiring many cancer-related website names to protect its brand.

That confusion may be mitigated, however, since ACS agreed to sign on with CancerCare (CC) and the Cancer Support Community (CSC) as the primary not-for-profit content providers for the site that Janssen hopes will provide tailored information and resources "to educate, motivate, and empower cancer patients."

Hematology annual meeting in Atlanta. It went public a few days later, according to Janssen officials contacted by *MedPage Today*.

Planning for the current site has been in the works since the summer of 2015, but the Johnson & Johnson family had originally acquired rights to the cancer.com domain in 1995, Janssen officials told *MedPage Today*.

After that, however, the site ran in fits and starts, a review of [web.archive.org records](https://web.archive.org) suggests. Initially J&J did little with it. By 1999, it was apparently forwarding users to a cancer information page hosted by the now-defunct PlanetRx online pharmacy. It was then disabled altogether for a few years, then revived by Janssen in 2004, which kept it full of content through 2006. The following year, though, it went into hibernation again until the relaunch last month.

To the question of whether the site's new content will be influenced by Janssen's commercial interests, the company swears it won't.

Leslie Amendola, who was recently promoted from senior director of oncology franchise strategy at Janssen to its marketing director, told *MedPage Today* in a telephone interview (monitored by a media relations representative) that cancer.com is a completely unbranded site.

"We don't link back to individual products. It's really important at Janssen Oncology to follow our mission to have a world where cancer is preventable, chronic, and curable," she said, adding that in addition to developing science the company also wants to bring forth cancer resources and solutions such as cancer.com in a vehicle that is not overwhelming to patients.

She said that the initial phase of the project is a "learn and adapt" approach, with resources that included cancers with high prevalence or in areas where Janssen had expertise and products, such as in multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and prostate cancer.

Breast and lung cancer constituted the initial high prevalence areas, with the goal of adding many more tumor types in the future.

The site also currently offers resources such as an [Advocacy Connector](#) that can be used by any cancer patient without providing the in-depth registration information required by another other part of the site, [My Care Activator](#), which Amendola described as a digital health coaching tool developed by J&J behavioral scientists to help patients customize

She said that using the cancer.com site required great responsibility and the company wanted to "get it right," adding that Janssen has had considerable growth in oncology during the past 5 years, and had finally found the right not-for-profit partners.

The initial criterion for advocacy partnerships was a pan-cancer orientation rather than focusing on a single cancer site. Other factors included the quality of content, the organization's reputation, and the availability of support services and programs.

Janssen said that ACS, CC, and CSC had all been approached within a time frame of about a month in 2015, and confirmed a longtime commitment to the partnerships, which involve renewable 6 to 18 month contracts with licensing fees paid for use of web content.

Other advocacy partners will be added over time, and the site also has other Janssen-approved licensed third-party sources including:

- *2 Minute Medicine*
- *BusinessInsider*
- Cleveland Clinic
- *CNN*
- *Environmental Nutrition*
- *Greatist*
- *Harvard Health Letter*
- *HealthDay*
- *Healthline*
- *Inside Health*
- *Mayo Clinic Health Information Library*

- National Cancer Institute
- *Patient Resource Publishing*
- *Prevention*
- *Psychology Today*
- *Reuters*
- *Science of Us*
- *The Associated Press*
- *The New York Times*
- *Tribute Content Premium Health Columns*
- *Women's Health*

Janssen has an agreement with the [Community Oncology Alliance](#) to sponsor its in-practice TV network by running a brief informational video on cancer.com to increase patient awareness, and plans a publicity push on World Cancer Day, February 4th.

Amendola said that Janssen would only collect patient information at an aggregate level or "in ways to help patients improve their experience on the site."

MedPage Today originally asked to speak with ACS CEO [Gary Reedy](#) to comment on the deal, but instead interviewed ACS chief cancer control officer [Richard C. Wender](#), MD.

Wender explained that ACS's board had decided that Reedy should not be directly involved in the project to avoid a potential conflict of interest since the ACS head had worked for Johnson & Johnson in several senior management positions for many years, including as president of Ortho Biotech, which became Janssen Biotech.

He said that Janssen had initially contacted ACS's [Cancer Action Network](#), the society's lobbying arm, and that ACS determined that he would manage the Janssen relationship.

ACS has a full-time team dedicated to gathering cancer information amounting to about

He said that there are so many cancer organizations today that the public is often confused about which is which, adding that the similarity between ACS and Janssen's websites makes the potential for confusion pretty great and increased the reasons for ACS's participation.

"In this case we would have been willing to share our information [with cancer.com] anyway, but the added motivation was that if people thought that they were getting to the American Cancer Society [site by mistake], we would want to make sure that they would see our information and could link back to our site."

Wender said that he was surprised Janssen did not have a more developed idea when discussions began with ACS, although that allowed the participating partners to have more initial input into the final design. He added that cancer.com was upfront about collecting information and that visitors could clearly see where information was from and could link back to the original sources.

"This doesn't alter Google hits, meaning that hits are attributed back to the original sites, not the site offering the shared information," Wender said.

Wender noted that although he wasn't certain whether the original three not-for-profit partners had veto power over the addition of certain new partners in the future, he said that Janssen would consult with them.

CancerCare CEO [Patricia J. Goldsmith](#) told *MedPage Today* that she thought that "third time was the charm" concerning the cancer.com site.

She had a professionally long history with the URL, she explained, going back to when she was a senior administrator at the Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Florida, in the 1990s, and learned that Ortho Biotech owned cancer.com.

"I was told that J&J had a vision for the URL as a destination site for cancer patients focusing on helping and supporting patients, and from a Moffitt and a psychosocial point of view I was very interested in working with them."

Goldsmith said that a few years later, after she was named EVP and COO of the [National Comprehensive Cancer Network](#) (NCCN), she learned that cancer.com was still languishing and spoke with NCCN Foundation Board member [William N. Hait](#), MD, PhD, who was to eventually become Global Head of Janssen Research and Development.

"Bill said that Janssen and J&J were interested in making something out of the site in

said, adding that NCCN was unsuccessful in getting Janssen to turn over the site to the network after the company decided not to pursue the project at the time.

She then fast-forwarded to when she joined CancerCare and still maintained strong relationships with Janssen, which asked if she would be interested in partnering with cancer.com.

It was a no-brainer and Goldsmith noted again that she hoped the third time would be the charm.

"It made no sense to reinvent the wheel, and working together with partners that were complementary, and Janssen, finally brought this project to fruition."

The Cancer Support Community welcomed inclusion into the current project because it leveraged the collective strengths of all three partners rather than duplicating efforts.

"Janssen was going to leverage good content already established by the partners," said the group's president, [Linda House](#), "so instead of creating its own site and having us endorse it, we were invited to help create a site with quality content from trusted partners."

House said that it was in the best interests of all the organizations to get the best information into the hands of patients and caregivers at the point when it was needed, there's a lot of cross-linking on the site, and the partners meet with Janssen quarterly.

"Putting it all together was a collaborative effort like I've never seen before," she said.

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