

Unite or Lose Progress: Why Nonprofits Must Act on Research Cuts Now

The fastest path to breakthroughs and cures is through shared ambition, knowledge and investment, write three cancer experts at follicular lymphoma nonprofits.

May 1, 2025 By E. Anders Kolb, Emma France and Dave McCullagh

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Steep budget cuts at the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) threaten to stall global research and slow scientific progress, negatively impacting patients for generations.

These cuts could not have come at a worse time. Cancer research is advancing rapidly, and lives are being saved. Since 1960, innovation in blood cancer treatment alone has added more than 20 million years of life in the U.S. But ongoing progress is not guaranteed.

Recognizing the urgency of this moment, our organizations have deepened our partnership to preserve research momentum, protect innovation and keep patients at the center of progress, even amid uncertainty.

Each of our organizations brings unique viewpoints and skills to the partnership but we share a common goal: curing follicular lymphoma. And each understands that long-term funding support is what enables scientists to build on discoveries, take smart risks, improve quality of life and move us closer to cures.

With a strong focus on forging international collaborations like this one, The Follicular Lymphoma Foundation (FLF) works as a catalyst for research innovation, accelerating progress and delivering hope to patients worldwide.

The Institute for Follicular Lymphoma Innovation (IFLI) is dedicated to developing a deeper understanding of follicular lymphoma to accelerate new treatments. IFLI supports cutting edge research and technology to accelerate novel therapeutics and biomarkers for follicular lymphoma treatment.

As the largest nonprofit funder of blood cancer research, over its 75-plus year history, The

Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) has delivered on its promise of providing sustained investment in research, delivering free information and support services to patients and families and advocating for policies that accelerate the development of new treatments and break down barriers to care.

Even as we write this, the NIH — the world's largest funder of cancer research — has already reduced and eliminated grants. A leaked 2026 budget blueprint proposes cutting an additional \$20 billion. This would devastate research pipelines just as we edge closer to long-sought breakthroughs.

A similar trend is seen beyond the United States — within the United Kingdom and other regions, where current investments and government support is insufficient to keep pace with rising costs seen across the board.

Strategic Philanthropy in Action

By joining forces, we are paving the path to cures, by identifying the biggest opportunities where we can truly stimulate innovation and make significant advances in the field (read more [here](#)). Our international partnership, “Research United to Cure Follicular Lymphoma” and “Research Accelerator for Follicular Lymphoma,” build on our distinct strengths and shared purpose.

Follicular lymphoma is the most common type of indolent (slow growing) non-Hodgkin lymphoma, affecting over a million people worldwide. While treatable, it remains incurable.

Although follicular lymphoma progression is often gradual, relapses are common, and each one diminishes patient outcomes and quality of life. The threat of transformation to aggressive lymphoma is ever-present. For these patients, the promise of a cure is not abstract — it is personal and urgent.

Our initiative is a model of strategic philanthropy in action. It aligns complementary expertise, pools flexible funding and eliminates redundancy to maximize impact. We co-develop programs, share data and insights and streamline decision-making to accelerate discovery. Together, we are smarter, faster and more agile than we could be alone.

Historically, follicular lymphoma has been underfunded by government research funding, even prior to recent threats. Most NIH grants tagged for “lymphoma” favor more aggressive types. That leaves a critical gap we are committed to filling.

Philanthropy can't replace public funding, but it can drive innovation

Even combined, we cannot close the gap of steep U.S. budget cuts, or indeed global financial constraints, but we can at least mitigate the fallout from sweeping budget reductions.

By directing substantial funds to academic and biopharma partners over the next decade, we are investing not just in treatment but in a cure. And in doing so, we're ensuring that patient perspectives shape the future of care and research.

Our success in coming together and strategically aligning our processes and missions doesn't have to be exclusive to us or even to cancer organizations.

Nonprofits from all backgrounds should connect and strategize ways they can work together.

The fastest path to a cure is through shared ambition, shared knowledge and shared investment. No single organization can do this alone, but together, we can change the future for patients around the world.

Global partnerships will be essential. Scientific innovation is a global effort, and U.S. cuts will have global consequences. We must ensure the pipeline of innovation remains open, wherever brilliant ideas originate.

The primary function of every nonprofit or philanthropic health-focused organization is to better serve their constituents. For us, that includes people living with follicular lymphoma, those who will one day be diagnosed and their families. It means ensuring the patient voice is heard, valued and meaningfully reflected in our work.

We hope our roadmap serves as a beacon for others. The time to act is now because the cost of inaction is measured in lives, and the next generation deserves better.

You can read more about the LLS, FLF and IFLI partnership in a commentary titled "[Follicular Lymphoma: Paving the Path to Cures Through Philanthropy](#)" by Mitchell R. Smith, Michel Azoulay and Lee M. Greenberger published in Clinical Lymphoma, Myeloma and Leukemia.