

# Cancer Society spends more on fundraising than research

By Erica Johnson, [CBC News](#)

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## Beginning of Story Content

An Ontario cancer researcher is concerned that the Canadian Cancer Society has proportionally shifted funding away from research and is spending more of its dollars on fundraising and administration costs.

"Most scientists don't realize that the budget has been going up and up, and donations have been growing, but the budget for research has been shrinking," said Brian Lichy, a researcher at McMaster University who is looking into treating cancer with viruses that kill tumours. "So they are surprised and disappointed when they find out that this is the case, and the trend."

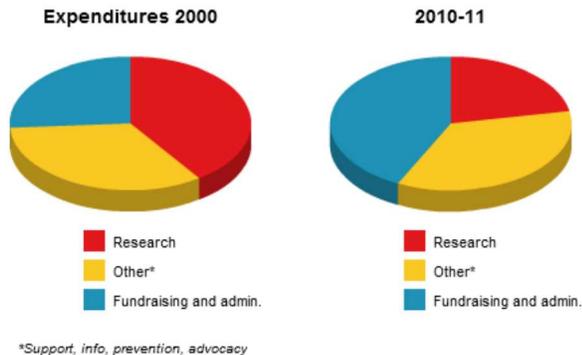
CBC's *Marketplace* analyzed the Canadian Cancer Society's [financial reports](#) dating back a dozen years. It discovered that each year, as the society raised more dollars, the proportion of money it spent on research dropped dramatically — from 40.3 per cent in 2000 to under 22 per cent in 2011.

The amount of money spent on research has increased slightly over the years, but as a portion of the Cancer Society's growing budget, it's almost been cut in half.

Lichy and some of his colleagues set up an information booth at this year's annual Relay for Life fundraiser in Ancaster, Ont., to raise awareness about the drop in funding for research at the Canadian Cancer Society. Over the years, his research team has received hundreds of thousands of dollars from the society, but he's not afraid to criticize it now.

"Cancer researchers are spending a lot of their time, or most of their time, trying to figure out how to get the money to fund their research, rather than actually doing research," Lichy said.

"And it has become a much bigger portion of what our day-to-day activities amount to."



*Marketplace* asked the Canadian Cancer Society for an on-camera interview, but it declined, instead responding by email:

"While funding cancer research is a crucial part of the society's work, we also have profound responsibilities to do everything we can to reduce the risk of Canadians ever developing cancer and to provide meaningful support to people living with cancer."

But when *Marketplace* scrutinized the financial reports, it found that a greater percentage of funds was not being directed toward support, information and advocacy.

Instead, the reports reveal that the area that's getting the greatest portion of donor dollars is fundraising, up from 26 per cent of all monies raised in 2000, to 42.7 per cent in 2011.

## P.O.V.

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Greg Thomson, a spokesman for the charity watchdog [Charity Intelligence](#), said the Canadian Cancer Society appears to spend more on fundraising than a number of other charities.

"I would want to understand better what they're spending their money on, why they're spending that much," Thomson said. "Because we found a number of very effective organizations that don't need to spend nearly the percentages on fundraising and admin that we've seen."

## Competing interests

Mark Blumberg, a lawyer who [advises](#) non-profits and charities but doesn't represent the Canadian Cancer Society, said the society may be spending less on research because that money may have more impact elsewhere.

"In the end, they need to listen to all the different interest groups and stakeholders that have an interest in the area, and not just prefer one and ignore others," Blumberg said. "I think what they are trying to do is spend money on different areas and balance stakeholders' interests."

Lichty said he's hoping his criticism of the society will encourage the largest funder of cancer research in Canada to shift its priorities back to finding new treatments and a cure.

"I suspect, if donors are not happy with the situation, if they want a greater proportion of their money to go to research — because that is why they donated their money — then maybe there will be a grassroots movement," Lichty said. "Some pressure from the donors and the volunteers to try and find a way to put more of the money they raise into research."

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### yyzdishing

2011/07/08  
at 11:58 PM ET

The canadian cancer society didn't even get the CEO to go live and provide an explanation, rather they sent an email.

It's really disturbing to read their statement that they focus on prevention and support rather than research. For me it's like telling the patients that end up with cancer ,sorry buddies we can't find cure, but here are some brochures to help you manage the side effects of chemo and we can get a volunteer to drive to and from chemo and once cancer finally gets you because we are not spending enough on research. Our fundraiser will be there in the hospital to comfort your loved ones and gush more money from them under the name of finding the cure. WHAT A JOKE.

Chemo and radiation have been the only way to treat Cancer since the 60 , what progress is actually made when in 2011 they are still used.

Rating
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### daisy47\_

2011/07/08  
at 10:15 AM ET

I employ everyone who has commented here to read this blog from an unbiased party who does not work for or have any connection to the Canadian Cancer Society:

[http://www.globalphilanthropy.ca/index.php/blog/comments/cbc\\_report\\_on\\_canadian\\_c-thoughts\\_on\\_transparency\\_media\\_cover/](http://www.globalphilanthropy.ca/index.php/blog/comments/cbc_report_on_canadian_c-thoughts_on_transparency_media_cover/)

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### Parodox

2011/07/08  
at 12:05 AM ET

Have seen a great many good people suffer and waste-away from cancer and the treatments provided. There is not enough space here to denote the good intentions of the CCS, however, the CCS, similarly to the ACS, who are dictated to by such as the NCI or Canada version(s), is not much more now than an embedded racket that supports the illusion of finding wellness cures in the guise of modifying 70' & 80's chemical pesticides into chemotherapy and radioactive infusions. The university researcher who is struggling for dollars is competing against the pharmaceutical oligarchy labs. Small researchers, at the first sign of making strides or deviating from established norms, may well have their funding slowed or shut down. The NCI in particular holds the funding keys, and if you're a decent (independent) physician or researcher with a novel idea, forget it, you will not see a dime. The cancer industry is a trillion dollar plus business and the cases are rising in concert with the toxicity that humanity is subjected to from our food, air and water. Since the 1950's, when cancer

started to spike, the world has had > 2,600 atmospheric, underground or oceanic nuclear detonations that spread toxic particulate through the atmosphere by wind, water or dust into our very food chain; this does not factor the effects of our human built nuclear facilities. We have become a sick toxic species, but thank goodness we can blame it all on smoking.

There are a few brave souls who have developed, at great personal costs, unequivocal and unparalleled methods of humane treatment that have been lobbied against, vilified and subjected to the most despicable legal challenges to suppress. The obvious racket is what you see in front of your eyes, which is the status quo, with a few twists thrown in once in awhile to keep up with appearances. Meanwhile, the suffering of people continues evermore and like some physicians, who have a clue, they face a mountain of erected deceptions and pressures, especially from their own medical associations.

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**FGRazz**

2011/07/07  
at 9:11 PM ET

Donating to a charity is a personal choice. Since CCS is the topic of this extended comment chain, one might want to also look beyond the finances and into the Canadian cancer mortality statistics they compile and publish...it is nothing short of baffling to me that after 40 years of a "war on cancer" that most of the statistic curves remain horizontal straight-lines except for a select few that have had small improvements in some patient's FIRST battle with the disease. If Betty Crocker or Duncan Hines had a cake mix that didn't rise, I doubt it would take them 40 years to change the recipe. Look at all the "miracle" cancer drugs our research system has developed...not much of a miracle at all looking in hindsight. If you like what research CCS spends money on and don't mind the manner they apportion the donations, fill your boots. It is your money...if you want to donate, you may want to want to look past the person with the biggest smile or best campaign ...and look for something that makes sense to you. After all, there are many other truly brilliant scientific approaches with significant advances right now...mostly all out of big pharma interest, just browse using the search engine for the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) /Pub Med website for an idea and then you can make an informed decision about where your money goes. For the record, food and natural herbs and spices surprisingly show much promise in the published technical data. So does some new work on a longstanding opposing view that cancer may well be a metabolic disease (a theory that is over 40 years old and answers many of the cancer questions). My money will go to new ideas, I have long ago lost faith in CCR cake batter.

Rating  
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21 13

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**RichardMcDonell**

2011/07/07  
at 4:55 PM ET

Not surprised at all.  
The Canadian Cancer Society is probably the largest and most relentless fund raising organization in the country. Just for a start, what do they pull in from the Terry Fox Run? \$20 mill a year? But that's only the start. Read the obits in your daily paper and there will always be at least one with ...in lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Canadian Cancer ..." One imagines they have someone on call at the palliative care ward to ambush the family when the patient dies.  
The article above deals in percentages, not absolute dollars. I'm curious as to what their actual gross take is. If we took that number and applied it per capita to all the western democracies, the cancer industry could be pulling in hundreds of millions annually. And what have they achieved?  
I haven't donated in years. The Rotary International polio fund - just for one example - has a lot more to show for a lot less money.

Rating  
11

27 16

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