The STEP Program: Supporting Solutions from Patient Advocacy Organizations

Education & Awareness

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The STEP Program™: Supporting Solutions from Patient Advocacy Organizations

Patient advocacy organizations are a key source of information, empowerment and support for patients at every step of their healthcare experience, helping patients and their families navigate the care they need.

Novartis developed the STEP (Solutions to Empower Patients) Program™ to fund innovative projects from US-based non-profit organizations that help to address some of the most pressing gaps between best practices and the care a patient actually receives. By supporting the patient advocacy organizations that are best positioned to tackle unmet patient needs, our goal is to reduce the burden of disease and help create a path to better care.

Proposal Submission and Review Process

Each round of the STEP Program focuses on a specific disease or aspect of healthcare, and a call for submissions is issued requesting advocacy organizations to develop a program or resource which addresses that area of significant unmet need. Once the submission period closes, an external review committee evaluates the proposals against pre-set scoring criteria and identifies those with the greatest potential to make a positive impact on patients and caregivers.

Each review committee consists of a diverse group of subject matter experts including healthcare providers and patients and/or caregivers to provide broad perspectives on the submitted proposals. Once the final proposals are selected, recipients are notified and recognized by Novartis.

For more information on the current call for submissions, including eligibility and requirements, please view the program submission FAQ. To apply, please visit the online application form.
Current Focus Areas: Advancing Biomarker Testing in the Cancer Community

The STEP Program is currently calling for proposals from US-based patient advocacy organizations for programs that aim to increase awareness and improve understanding of biomarker testing within the cancer community.

With the acceleration of personalized medicine, we hope that treatments will one day be tailored to each person’s cancer. In oncology, personalized medicine is often guided by results of biomarker testing that can identify specific changes in cancerous cells. This testing is also referred to as genomic testing, molecular profiling, or tumor profiling, among other names.\(^1\) Though biomarker testing has become one of the cornerstones of personalized medicine, especially within oncology, there remain significant challenges when it comes to education, access and reimbursement.\(^2,3,4\)

To help improve testing rates, the STEP Program will recognize and fund proposals that demonstrate innovation in the following areas:

- Awareness and education
- Self-advocacy
- Policy improvement

For more information on the Biomarker Testing STEP Program, including eligibility and requirements, please view the program submission [FAQ](#). To apply, please visit the [online application form](#).

Prior STEP Program Funding Recipients

Since its creation, the STEP Program has funded a variety of programs and resources that are helping to pave the way toward a better future for patients, their caregivers and the healthcare community.

### Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) Recipients Represent Broad Impact of the Disease

SCD is a genetic blood disorder that causes ongoing damage to blood vessels and organs.\(^5\)
It is a lifelong illness that places a physical and emotional burden on patients and their families as they manage issues around work, school and family.

Through the STEP Program, five organizations received a total of nearly $250,000 for their proposals to improve the lives of people living with the disease.

Funded programs include:

- **All One Blood’s video series** [5] revealing powerful stories of those living with SCD to encourage self-advocacy.
- **Children’s Research Institute’s INSERTT (ImproviNg SickE TRansition Through Telemedicine)** [6], a study evaluating the impact of telemedicine on improving health outcomes for SCD patients as they transition to adult care.
- **Sickle Cell 101’s FACTSS (FAcilitating Communication BeTweeen PatientS and ProviderS)** [7], a digital toolkit containing customized communication strategies to empower patients to take control of their care and navigate the healthcare system.
- **The Sickle Cell Foundation of Georgia, Inc.’s interactive workshops** [8] providing adolescents with the tools to successfully transition from pediatric to adult care.
- **The Georgia Health Policy Center at Georgia State University’s educational videos** [9] that will equip patients and caregivers with tools to understand the benefits and potential complications of therapeutic blood transfusions.

Proposals were evaluated by an external review committee made up of experts in the fields of advocacy, psycho-social support and multi-cultural health, as well as an SCD practitioner and patient.

For more information on our SCD STEP Program, please read our STEP Program press releases.

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**Metastatic Breast Cancer (MBC) Recipients Making a Difference**

Approximately 155,000 people in the United States are living with MBC, a form of cancer that has spread from the breast to other parts of the body, such as the brain, bones, or liver. At this stage, the disease is incurable and life expectancy drops dramatically. An MBC diagnosis can be overwhelming, and people living with the disease face many unique challenges.
Through the STEP Program, three advocacy organizations were provided a total of $225,000 to support the MBC community.

Funded programs include:

- **FORCE’s XRAY: MBC (eXamining the Relevance of Articles for You: Metastatic Breast Cancer)** [10], a resource that helps patients and their caregivers interpret media coverage of MBC research, understand the relevance of this research for their clinical care, and discuss the information with their health care providers.
- **METAvivor’s MBC PREP (Metastatic Breast Cancer Patient Resource and Education Portal)** [11], which enables patients to easily access online information specific to their MBC diagnoses to make personalized and informed choices about their health.
- **PAF’s Financial Resource Directory for Metastatic Breast Cancer Patients** [12], an online tool that delivers information about financial resources to patients and caregivers who are experiencing or at risk of debt crisis as a result of their MBC diagnosis.

Proposals were evaluated by an external review committee made up of experts in psycho-oncology, nurse navigation, as well as an MBC caregiver and expert in advocacy.

For more information on the MBC STEP Program, please read our STEP Program press releases.

**Recent Press Releases**

- [Insert link to Biomarker Testing Launch press release]
- Five nonprofit organizations to receive up to $250,000 through Novartis STEP Program™ to support sickle cell patient initiatives [13]
- Novartis to fund five innovative ideas to support patients and the sickle cell community [14]
- Novartis announces funding for patient advocacy initiatives to support and empower metastatic breast cancer community [15]
- Novartis launches STEP Program™ to inspire solutions for people Living with metastatic breast cancer [16]

**Contact Us**

For questions about the STEP Program, please contact a member of the STEP Program team at step.program@novartis.com [17].

Source URL: https://www.pharma.us.novartis.com/stories/education-awareness/step-program-supporting-solutions-patient-advocacy-organizations

Links
[8] https://sicklecellga.org/
[9] https://ghpc.gsu.edu/
[10] https://www.facingourrisk.org/index.php?gclid=CjwKCAjw3azoBRAXEiwA-64OrPC1ChbGHKMIfli_JGG_Hx4LzaVEpay3ipqRbc6FAu0DpTRdkVHzhoCF4IQAvD_BwE
[12] https://www.patientadvocate.org/
[17] https://www.pharma.us.novartis.com/step.program%40novartis.com