

# Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center

## Firefighter Cancer Initiative

### FACT SHEET

Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, part of the University of Miami Health System and the Miller School of Medicine, launched the Firefighter Cancer Initiative (FCI) in 2015 to understand and address the excess cancer burden among firefighters.

Cancer is a leading cause of death for firefighters, who are exposed to toxic chemicals in smoke, fire protection materials and operations. There are about 1 million volunteer and career firefighters in the United States.

More than 120 cancer researchers and 130 cancer specialists are part of FCI. Researchers study cancer in Florida firefighters and employ science-based methods to reduce risk.

FCI does:

- Florida Firefighter Cancer Registry: it identifies cancers disproportionately affecting firefighters, including bladder, testicular and thyroid among men; and cervical, thyroid and Hodgkin lymphoma among women.
- Educational and survivorship curriculums: cancer prevention education curriculum delivered to new recruits and incumbent firefighters. Delivery of online stress management program for firefighter cancer survivors.
- Environmental sampling program: devices deployed to training and live fire events to monitor environmental conditions.
- Personal Exposure Reporter: an app created so firefighters can track their exposure to hazardous substances via a smartphone.
- Biomonitoring: collection of biological samples to assess firefighters' exposures to toxicants. Tumors are also collected to support research of cancer mechanisms.
- Fire station inspections: on-site inspections at fire stations identify ways to reduce health risks where firefighters live and work.
- Mobile clinic: the CARES To Go mobile clinic has provided hundreds of occupational health assessments at fire stations.
- Annual International Fire Service Cancer Symposium: hundreds of experts convene in Miami and virtually annually to share the state of science in firefighter cancer research.

## COLLABORATIONS

FCI involves diverse teams of scientists, healthcare practitioners and occupational health and safety experts who collaborate with public safety agencies, local communities and other research institutions to advance its mission.

FCI has enrolled about 3,000 firefighters in the national Annual Cancer Survey to track long-term health of firefighters across the United States.

FCI partners with the International Association of Firefighters to screen firefighters worldwide.

## LEADERSHIP

FCI leaders include:

- Dr. Stephen D. Nimer, M.D., director, Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center.
- Erin Kobetz, Ph.D., M.P.H., FCI director and principal investigator, associate director for community outreach and engagement at Sylvester and chief equity officer at University of Miami Health System.
- Alberto Caban-Martinez, Ph.D., M.P.H., FCI deputy director and investigator, vice chair for research at the Department of Public Health Sciences and associate vice provost for Research Integrity, Regulatory Affairs and Assessment at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.
- Natasha Schaefer Solle, Ph.D., R.N., FCI deputy director and investigator, research associate professor at Sylvester.

FCI is supported by the state of Florida, National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety, Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Cancer Institute (NIH).

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Research leading to changes in policy and procedures is one of the best ways to help reduce cancer risk. Accomplishments include workers' compensation for Florida firefighters diagnosed with certain types of cancer; improved decontamination practices; a Florida Firefighter Cancer Registry; and requirements for new firefighters to undergo health training.

## RESOURCES

- Cancer Prevention and Wellness Clinic: 305-243-FIRE (3473)
- Website: <https://umiamihealth.org/en/sylvester-comprehensive-cancer-center/research/firefighter-cancer-initiative>

