



Member Spotlight

What is your organization's Mission? What do you do?
Who do you serve?

The New York City Health Department protects and promotes the health of 8 million diverse New Yorkers living in the five boroughs. Our Division is the Health Department's Center for Health Equity and Community Wellness, which works to ensure that every New Yorker, regardless of where they live, has the opportunity to lead their healthiest lives. I'm the Assistant Director of the Cancer Prevention and Control Program, which focuses on prevention, since cancer is the second-leading cause of death in New York City after heart disease and the leading cause of death among people younger than 65.

What motivates you to work to reduce the burden of cancer?

Not every case of cancer can be prevented. But I feel motivated because many can, and more than 4 in 10 cancers and cancer deaths are preventable by having a healthy lifestyle (Islami F, et al. CA Can J Clin, 2018 Jan;68(1):31-54). What's more, the cancers that are top killers – lung, colon, and breast – can be detected early through timely screenings. I lost my father to lung cancer and my mother to breast cancer. Both were diagnosed at very late stages of disease, but I know that by promoting cancer screenings, we can help people have diagnoses at earlier, more treatable stages.

What might you say to an individual who is considering joining the NYS Cancer Consortium?

Join the NYS Cancer Consortium to interact with, learn from, and plan with people who are motivated to lower the cancer burden, like you. Members are from local Health Departments, insurers, the American Cancer Society, academic researchers and others all working together. Join an Action Team to focus on one type of cancer prevention and control, such as the Colorectal Cancer Action team.



Jennifer J. Brown, PhD
New York City Health Department

Which of your cancer-related initiatives are you most proud of?

I am most proud of the Health Department's free colon cancer screenings for people who have no health insurance, the Community Cares Project (CCP). Since 2013, more than 4,500 New Yorkers without insurance have completed colonoscopy free of cost to them through CCP. In CCP's model, primary care physicians at Community Health Centers directly refer medically eligible, uninsured patients to their partnered endoscopy center for a colonoscopy screening. The endoscopy center provides the free screening, as well as free anesthesia and pathology services. This is a step toward health equity as the uninsured population completes a timely colonoscopy 21% less often than those with health insurance (NYC Community Health Survey, 2016-2018).

