Today, almost 700,000 Americans are fighting the devastating symptoms, lack of effective treatment options, bleak survival rates, and crippling financial implications of a brain tumor diagnosis. Although brain tumors are one of America’s most deadly diseases, many are completely unaware of the challenges a brain tumor diagnosis can bring. Curing brain tumors is a subject there should be no debate about, and all of us, including Congress, can help.

What’s at Stake in the Fight Against Brain Tumors?

Simply put – lives are at stake. Brain tumors are among the deadliest cancers, with a five-year relative survival rate of just 34%. Glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) – the most common brain cancer – has a five-year relative survival rate of just 4.7%. Brain tumors are the leading cause of cancer-related death in children under the age of 14. Mortality rates have remained flat, and little progress has been made to extend survival. With only four (4) new therapies approved in the last 30 years, current treatment options for brain tumors are quite limited, and may deliver long-term and negative side effects. With some brain tumors, such as diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG), options are limited further because the tumor’s location makes surgical removal impossible. Even when treatment is successful, brain tumor survivors often need a wide range of essential health services, including physical and occupational therapy, psycho-social care, and on-going medical monitoring.
Who’s at Risk for a Brain Tumor?

Men and Women

• Of those diagnosed with a brain tumor, 57% occur in women and 43% occur in men.

Children

• In 2015, an estimated 3,420 new malignant and non-malignant brain tumors will be diagnosed in children under the age of 15.6

Race

• Brain tumors affect all races, with incidence rates highest in Whites (20.61 per 100,000), followed by African-Americans (20.12 per 100,000), followed by Hispanics (19.36 per 100,000).7

What’s the Risk of Getting a Brain Tumor?

There are few established risk factors for brain tumors. Only about 5% of brain tumors may be linked to hereditary conditions. There is no conclusive evidence that electromagnetic fields, such as those from power lines or cell phones, cause brain tumors. The World Health Organization has recommended that if a person has concerns about cell phone use, they should use a headset. Ionizing radiation, such as that used in x-rays, may in some cases be a risk factor.8

What’s Needed to Fight a Brain Tumor?

Strengthened Research

• As cancer research progresses to a point at which it can target particular tumor cells with the right therapy, in the right dose for each patient, it is essential that we step up basic and translational cancer research. It is also now time to leverage Congress’ investment in The Cancer Genome Atlas project of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to help create predictive models and precision medicine clinical trials.

• We ask Congress to increase funding for the NCI to $5.4 billion and NIH to $33 billion in FY2016 in order to continue research progress.

Advances in Therapy Development

• With only a few treatments approved to treat brain tumors in the past 30 years, we need a better clinical trial environment to accelerate the development and approval of therapies. Brain tumor patients don’t have the luxury of time – they need more effective treatment options, today. Public policy should continue to create incentives for the biopharmaceutical industry to advance safe and effective therapies.

Improved Health Care Services

• We ask Congress to support legislation that would make patient administered anti-cancer medicine including oral chemotherapy as affordable on an out of pocket basis as hospital delivered cancer medicine.

6 http://www.cbtrus.org/factsheet/factsheet.html