



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

### **Taking it to Church: Enhancing Myeloma Knowledge and Access to Latest Treatments To Address Health Disparities in African American Communities**

*-The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Launches Myeloma Link: Connecting African American Communities to Information, Expert Care, and Support in collaboration with The National Black Church Initiative -*

**Washington, D.C. and Rye Brook, NY (March 23, 2017)** –The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) together with the National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) announce the launch of a church-based initiative addressing striking health disparities among African Americans with multiple myeloma. Black Americans have twice the incidence of multiple myeloma as white Americans, and recent studies show black Americans are significantly less likely to receive the newest treatments or combination therapies, and are more likely to experience treatment delays, including transplant delays.

The multifaceted program, called *Myeloma Link: Connecting African American Communities to Information, Expert Care, and Support*, will improve access to novel therapies and quality of life among African Americans with myeloma, by providing tools and resources to navigate the treatment landscape more effectively and cope with the disease. It is the first collaboration between the NBCI and a major health advocacy organization to heighten awareness of myeloma. The goal is to increase knowledge about multiple myeloma and available treatments, provide critical information and resources, and encourage patients and caregivers to use a new, sustainable support infrastructure.

“The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society is committed to increasing access to education and treatment for multiple myeloma in the African American community, and breaking down barriers to clinical trials,” commented Louis J. DeGennaro, Ph.D., LLS president and CEO. “We look forward to an ongoing collaboration with the National Black Church Initiative to have a positive impact, particularly in low-income communities, through this unique church-based approach.”

The 18-month pilot program to be rolled out in key churches across metro Washington, D.C., and Atlanta, GA, will:

- Create local networks of **Myeloma Ambassadors** (patients or caregivers) to provide support and information
- Feature **Myeloma Sundays** consisting of a “health sermon” by respected healthcare professionals and **Health Alert** fact sheets placed in church bulletins.



- Conduct additional in-depth, healthcare provider-led **education programs**
- Develop **church-based support groups**
- Create a **directory of national and local resources**
- **Connect patients and caregivers with master’s level oncology professionals at LLS** - a free service for blood cancer patients and caregivers providing answers to their disease and treatment questions as well as offering additional support.

LLS and NBCI will use learnings from this pilot to bring the program to scale nationally in rural, suburban, and urban areas throughout the country.

In addition, LLS is supporting a large portfolio of research seeking to understand better the mechanisms of multiple myeloma, help approved therapies work better and support novel approaches to treatment.

“There have been many new therapies approved by the FDA for multiple myeloma this past year alone, and they are changing the treatment paradigm for patients diagnosed with the disease, an incurable blood cancer that begins in the bone marrow. We want to ensure that all patients benefit from these advances,” added Dr. DeGennaro.

Rev. Anthony Evans, president of the National Black Church Initiative, noted, “We are deeply honored to join with The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society to address this critical area of health regarding multiple myeloma and we look forward to a very rich relationship.”

“It is important for African Americans to be aware of the resources available to help them with a multiple myeloma diagnosis,” continued Rev. Evans. “Our congregation members can become better-informed patients and caregivers by calling or emailing LLS Information Specialists, masters-level oncology professionals who work one-on-one to help blood cancer patients navigate the best route from diagnosis through treatment, clinical trials and survivorship.”



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### **About The National Black Church Initiative**

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of 34,000 African American and Latino churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. NBCI's mission is to provide critical wellness information to all of its members, congregants, churches and the public. Our methodology is utilizing faith and sound health science.

NBCI's purpose is to partner with major organizations and officials whose main mission is to reduce racial disparities in the variety of areas cited above. NBCI offers faith-based, out-of-the-box and cutting edge solutions to stubborn economic and social issues. NBCI's programs are governed by credible statistical analysis, science based strategies and techniques, and methods that work. Visit our website at [www.naltblackchurch.com](http://www.naltblackchurch.com).

### **About The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society**

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society® (LLS) is the world's largest voluntary health agency dedicated to blood cancer. The LLS mission: Cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma, and improve the quality of life of patients and their families. LLS funds lifesaving blood cancer research around the world, provides free information and support services, and is the voice for all blood cancer patients seeking access to quality, affordable, coordinated care.

Founded in 1949 and headquartered in Rye Brook, NY, LLS has chapters throughout the United States and Canada. To learn more, visit [www.LLS.org](http://www.LLS.org). Patients should contact LLS Information Specialists at (800) 955-4572, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET.

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