Invisible Threat

Over the years, the IMF has been a resource for first responders seeking information about myeloma. Having successfully worked on behalf of first responders on the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Reauthorization Act, the IMF has learned much about the effects of debris and particulate matter exposure on the human body. Firefighters are subjected to such exposures on a near daily basis and the cancer occurrence rate for these first responders is historically higher for every major form of cancer, including myeloma. Firefighters are developing myeloma and other cancers earlier and at a higher rate than the general population.

Risk reduction and prevention strategies are the first step in ensuring first responders have the best possible health outcomes now and in the future. A multi-pronged approach is needed in order to make first responders aware of the dangers, provide those responders with mitigation strategies that work, and educate providers as to the additional exposures to which firefighters are exposed.

Mitigation and Prevention Strategies

Through online media, the IMF will create freely accessible information in video format that directly addresses the danger posed to firefighters with environmental exposures, how that danger can affect their health now and in the future, and how that danger can be reduced or even prevented. Specific ways to mitigate and/or prevent exposure will be provided by Dr. James Cripps, a scientist and former firefighter.

Topics will include the following:
- Cancer Awareness in Fire Service
- Cancer Mitigation Strategies
- Hidden Dangers in Our Personal Protective Equipment & Firehouse
- Fire Service Culture Change
- How Do Firefighters Get Cancer?
- How Can I Limit My Risk?
- Fire Chief Officers Role in Preventing Cancer
- The Fire Service Epidemic

These topics will be individualized into short, easily digestible videos between 2 and 10 minutes in length that when played in series will provide a comprehensive overview of the issue as described above and strategies to reduce exposures for fire service members.

Firefighter Resource Guide

One of the most challenging aspects for a person suffering from a medical condition that is not yet diagnosed is providing relevant information to their physician that could aid in that diagnosis. For current and former firefighters, this challenge is compounded by the lack of electronic medical records that could inform their family doctor as to their time in the fire service.

Former firefighters who may have been volunteers many years ago are particularly susceptible to omitting their service when speaking to their doctor. The IMF, in concert with Dr. Cripps, will create a guide for current and former firefighters that explains the need for providing this information to their doctor, even if they are not experiencing any issues. The guide will also provide example medical resumes for those interested in creating them, which could lead to earlier diagnosis and better health outcomes.

The guide will be placed on the IMF website as a PDF download and continually updated whenever new information becomes necessary.

Advocacy Opportunities

Identifying new opportunities to work with legislators at the state and federal level on policy that promotes firefighter health and safety, such as H.R. 5637, the Michael Lecky Military Firefighters Protection Act.