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Romney Vows to Increase Cancer Research

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Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney told breast cancer survivors Tuesday that their disease "is getting less than a fair shake" when it comes to research funding.

Romney, a former governor who made health care reform his signature issue in Massachusetts, suggested that as president he would increase federal spending on research of breast cancer and other cancers.

"There's no substitute for funding," he said at a conference of Susan G. Komen for the Cure, a 25-year-old network of breast cancer survivors.

Romney and the group's founder, Nancy G. Brinker, sat on stage in matching silver armless chairs, their backs against huge pink pillows, as she posed a handful of questions that other presidential candidates had already answered via videotape.

Romney got into the spirit of the event, twice borrowing the group's slogan to say, "I'm getting pinked up!"

Brinker did not ask Romney about his opposition to embryonic stem cell research, a position that puts him at odds with many health care advocacy groups. But she did want to know what he would do help further the fight against cancer.

Romney said private and public money are desperately needed for research.

"I haven't put together a budget yet. It seems a little early," he said with a chuckle. "But I think you can expect that, at least in my view, the right way to allocate money to research is on a scientific basis not just a political basis. I don't think you should determine who should get how much money based on who came in your office last."

"On that basis, it's pretty clear that breast cancer, and cancer in general, are not getting their fair share," he said, adding later: "Cancer is getting less than a fair shake."

Romney said other keys are cancer prevention and detection, both of which would improve nationally if more people could afford routine health care.

"For that to happen, in my view, we have to have everybody insured," the Republican said. "I will fight to get every person in this country health insurance."

Romney opposes public-run health care systems like those in Canada and Britain. He helped Massachusetts enact a landmark health program that makes sure anybody who qualifies for Medicaid enrolls in the program, requires people who can afford health insurance to purchase it and offers subsidies for middle-class people who can't afford insurance.

The state worked with insurance companies to find ways to offer low-cost, low-coverage insurance.

Romney has said he would not impose the Massachusetts system or the health insurance mandate on any states as president, but he would give state leaders wide latitude on how they spend federal money.

His hope is that states would use the money to craft their own plans to get more people insured.

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