



Since 1991 deaths from cancer in the US have declined by 29%, according to the New York Times. (ddp)

UBS House View - Daily US

# Investing in good health and well-being

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**The mortality rate from cancer in the US fell by 2.2% for the last year of data, the largest annual decline on record, according to the American Cancer Society. Since 1991 deaths from cancer have declined by 29%, equivalent to 2.9 million fewer fatalities the *New York Times* reported.**

Experts have attributed the improvement in part to lifestyle changes, with a reduction in smoking contributing to lower instances of lung cancer and more than offsetting the impact of higher obesity levels on the increased incidence of obesity-related cancers.

But part of the credit was due to improved treatments, including less invasive forms of surgery and advances in immunotherapy that help enlist the T-cells of patients to kill tumors. We think investors can contribute to progress in this area by allocating funds to firms involved in oncology, health technology, and genetic therapies. This approach can also align portfolios with the goal of achieving UN Sustainable Development Goal 3, which focuses on promoting health and well-being.

**1. Health technology firms have the potential to contribute further to cutting cancer mortality while addressing a growing market.** Image-guided and robotic surgery techniques can also trim healthcare costs by reducing surgical complications and shortening hospital

stays. We estimate the overall size of the medical imaging market at USD 32bn.

**2. Advances in gene therapy – which seeks to modify genetic information to cure diseases – are starting to produce commercially available treatments.** In May 2019 the FDA approved its second gene therapy to treat an inherited genetic disease. This followed the first such gene therapy approval, and those of two cell therapies for cancer, in 2017. Sales of these products are now annualizing at over USD 1bn, should current growth rates be maintained.

**3. Immuno-oncology, harnessing the immune system to treat cancer, has come of age over the past five years.** The new generation of drugs used in such treatments, known as checkpoint inhibitors, have established themselves as the standard of care in advanced lung cancer and melanoma, and are building sales in other cancers such as liver and kidney.

Despite recent improvements in treatment, much remains to be done, and progress around the world has not been uniform. Incidences of cancer have been rising in China, for example. So we see a wealth of opportunities for investors who seek long-term returns while aligning their portfolios with their values. For more details, see our [Long Term Investment themes](#) on oncology, gene therapy, and health technology.

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**Content is a product of the Chief Investment Office (CIO).**

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