

Statements from the President's Cancer Panel

*President's Cancer Panel
Translating Research to Reduce the Burden of Cancer
November 01, 2004*

The President's Cancer Panel continued its series of meetings on *Translating Research to Reduce the Burden of Cancer* in Houston, Texas, at The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center. Experts at this meeting emphasized differing challenges in moving cancer discoveries through the development-to-delivery continuum, including the need for significant cultural shifts at multiple academic, regulatory, and institutional levels. Specific recommendations for change were presented to the Panel for consideration in its deliberations.

Participants called attention to the existing imbalance between the numbers of dedicated researchers in basic science and translational research, respectively. They suggested that a national strategy be developed to shift the emphasis between these disciplines, including transforming individual and team reward structures and peer review to better support translational research. This will also require a cultural shift and reevaluation of grant review criteria and of assessments made by review committee members. The Specialized Programs of Research Excellence (SPOREs) initiative was mentioned as a successful model for structuring translational research efforts.

Highlighted again at this meeting was the need for a certification process for Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and designation of a centralized IRB for multi-institutional studies that will be accepted by all participating institutions. These changes would both reduce IRB burdens and improve the efficiency of the informed consent/human research protection review and approval process.

Exciting demonstration projects linking research discovery with delivery of findings to the community were shared, with the caveat that there must be committed institutional support and financing for such community outreach efforts to succeed and be sustainable. This point was consistent with statements made at prior meetings that there is a national funding responsibility to enhance community outreach efforts.

Patent law issues, intellectual property agreements, and conflict-of-interest issues were discussed in more detail, with the suggestion that key stakeholders be convened to consider development of patent research exemptions, sample intellectual property agreement templates (to foster and facilitate academia-industry negotiated collaborations), and clear conflict-of-interest definitions. In particular, the patent research exemptions would more closely align the United States with its European research counterparts. The Panel was also asked to monitor the impact of the Medicare

Modernization Act (MMA), particularly as it relates to reimbursements for clinical trial costs and those of standard cancer treatments—for example, how access to clinical trials may impact MMA beneficiaries or whether underinsured patients (those without supplemental insurance) are compromising their cancer care based on cost reimbursement issues.

Issues of distrust in the cancer research enterprise—and in particular, the drug development process—continue to be raised. Involving the community at earlier stages in the discovery-development process as full participating partners was mentioned as one way to alleviate negative perceptions and foster community-based research support. It was emphasized that core components of such a partnership are fostering of researcher-community trust and respect. The value of daily call-in programs that promote information exchange on cancer and health care issues was mentioned in this context.

The Panel will hold its fourth meeting on this topic in January 2005 in New York, after which it will develop a report to the President and Congress outlining key issues and recommendations for better translating research to reduce the burden of cancer.

The President's Cancer Panel, an advisory group established by Congress to monitor the Nation's efforts to reduce the burden of cancer, reports directly to the President on delays or blockages in that effort. For more information, visit the Panel's web site at <http://deainfo.nci.nih.gov/ADVISORY/pcp/pcp.htm>, call 301-451-9399, or e-mail to pcp-r@mail.nih.gov.