

THE

CANCER LETTER

FAX

Vol. 22 No. 2
Jan. 12, 1996

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Price \$265 Per Year US
\$285 Per Year Elsewhere

Congress Funds NIH Through Fiscal Year, Re-Opening Agency With 5.7% Increase

Congress has passed legislation providing \$11.9 billion to NIH for fiscal 1996, a 5.7 percent increase over last year's appropriation.

The bill includes \$2.251 billion for NCI, an increase of \$114.6 million over last year's appropriation.

The measure was included in bills passed Jan. 5 reopening the federal
(Continued to page 2)

In Brief

Former Oklahoma Rep. Synar, Opponent Of Tobacco, Dead At 45 Of Brain Cancer

MIKE SYNAR, the former eight-term Democratic congressman from Oklahoma who fought for tobacco regulation and gun control, died Jan. 9 at his home in Washington, DC. Synar, 45, was diagnosed with glioblastoma multiforme last July, less than a year after a primary loss ended his congressional career. During his career in the House, Synar investigated tobacco companies' statements about their products, pressed for FDA regulation of tobacco, and led efforts to institute a \$2 per pack federal excise tax on cigarettes. "He was all that we fantasize a Congressman should be," said Michael Pertschuk, co-director of the Washington-based Advocacy Institute, a training center for public interest advocates. . . .

UNIV. OF TEXAS Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas received a \$100,000 donation from the Lowe Foundation of Houston to fund the Lowe Foundation Professorship in Pediatric Neuro-Oncology. Perry Nisen, associate professor of pediatrics, was named to the professorship. . . .

BEATRICE MINTZ, geneticist and senior member, Fox Chase Cancer Center, was awarded a two-year \$313,000 American Cancer Society Special Research Grant for genetic studies of metastatic melanoma. . . .

1996 NATIONAL RACE FOR THE CURE is scheduled for June 15 in Washington, DC. The race, sponsored by the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, attracted more than 26,000 participants last year. To register, call 703/848-9364. . . . **UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA IRVINE**

Clinical Cancer Center seeks applicants for a tenure-track position, assistant or associate professor level. Applicants will be expected to maintain laboratory-based clinical research program in molecular oncology with a focus on solid tumors. Send c.v./references to Frank Meyskens Jr., chief, Division of Hematology/Oncology, UCI Clinical Cancer Center, Bldg 23 RT 81, Rm 244, Orange, CA 92668, tel: 714/456-8101, fax: 714/456-7142.

ACS, In Reorganization,
To Emphasize Funds
For Young Scientists
. . . Page 2

French Cancer Group
Vows To Spend More
On Cancer Research
. . . Page 4

Cigarette Smoking
Increases Among Youth,
Annual Report Finds
. . . Page 4

Coordinated Budget
For Federal R&D
Urged In NAS Report
. . . Page 5

Letter to the Editor:
Colleagues Describe
Bunn As Leader,
Patient Advocate
. . . Page 8

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NIH Funded Through FY96; Snow Delays Return To Work

(Continued from page 1)

government, which had been shut down for three weeks due to the budget impasse.

The legislation brought federal employees back to work, provided full-year funding for several agencies including NIH, and provided continuing funds through Jan. 26 for those agencies whose appropriations have not been approved.

Rep. John Porter (R-IL), chairman of the House Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Subcommittee, led the effort to include funding for NIH in the measures passed by Congress. Porter had fought for the 5.7 percent increase for NIH in a year in which the Congress cut \$9 billion in discretionary spending from the Labor, HHS, Education appropriations bill.

The funding level was \$341.5 million higher than the amount approved by the Senate and \$166.5 million above the Administration's request.

"The Congressman made the case very strongly to the [House and Senate] leadership that NIH ought to be among those programs that should be funded through remainder of fiscal year, locking in the strong support for NIH that was evident in the appropriations bills," David Kohn, a spokesman for Porter, said. "He often points out that he believes Americans understand the priority of biomedical research, not only for its human benefit, but also its substantial economic benefit."

As of this writing, details of NIH and NCI budget plans were not available. Federal offices in Washington again were shut down Jan. 8 and 9, this

time due to the blizzard that dropped 20 inches of snow in the area.

"Our understanding is that we are funded through Sept. 30 at 5.7 percent above the FY95 level, which is indeed good," Anne Thomas, NIH spokesman, said. "We haven't seen the text of the [appropriations] bill yet."

Once NIH employees return to work, they will have to dig out from the three-week accumulation of paperwork, Thomas noted.

ACS To Favor Young Scientists In Research Grants Program

Following a review of unmet needs in cancer research, the American Cancer Society has changed the focus of its extramural research program to favor the work by scientists in the beginning of their careers.

Also, the society said it would initiate a program of targeted research and increase commitment to cancer prevention as well as epidemiological, psychosocial, behavioral and health care policy research.

The changes follow the advice of a 21-member panel of experts appointed to examine the state of cancer research and professional training and identifying gaps and opportunities ACS could fill.

"It is clear that we can't fill all of the needs resulting from the downward change in federal funding in science," John Laszlo, ACS national vice president for research, said to **The Cancer Letter**.

"The number of applications to us keeps rising, and we come to a point where we can't accept everyone anymore," Laszlo said. "We have to focus on the areas where our advisory committee thinks we can make our best impact."

Research Funding Decreased

The shift also comes at a time when ACS has had to decrease research funding. During the fiscal year ended Sept. 1, the society awarded \$76.5 million in extramural grants, \$18 million less than during the previous year. Research funding is expected to be about the same during the current year, Laszlo said.

The drop in research funding was the consequence of a three-year rebate program adopted by ACS to enable the society's 57 local divisions to revamp their fundraising strategies.

Typically, the divisions send 40% of the funds they collect to the society's national office, which, in

THE CANCER LETTER

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turn, allocates money to programs that include research.

However, with collections slipping, the national office began a three-year program of rebates to the divisions, which would commit the rebates to developing marketing strategies.

During the first year, when the divisions were given back 5% of their contributions, research funding remained unchanged. In the second year, when the rebate increased to 10%, research was not spared. In the current year, the rebate is 15%, ACS officials said.

“We are not just trying to get back to where we were, but to get stronger,” Laszlo said. “We’d like to devote well over \$100 million a year to research. And that’s the aim of our fundraising efforts.”

In 1994, ACS funded 800 grants, with each grantee receiving about \$100,000 per year, Laszlo said. Last year, the number of grants funded dropped to 677. First-time applicants were hit hard in this downturn, as only 8.1% of first time applications received funding, Laszlo said.

The drop in funding appeared to be a concern to the advisory committee that recommended the changes in the ACS research program.

“The [committee] is concerned by the threats of absolute reductions in research funding and the current real reductions in the rate of growth of research funding by the federal government, industry, and non-profit organizations,” the committee said in its report. “The [committee] therefore urges the American Cancer Society to restore its research commitment to the highest levels of support possible.”

Young Investigators Favored

As the changes are being implemented, the society’s Research Project Grants, previously called the Research and Clinical Investigation Grants, will be restricted to investigators within eight years of their first independent research or faculty appointment.

Typically, initial grants will be funded for up to three years, and may be competitively renewed twice, for a maximum of two consecutive two-year periods. Investigators would not be funded past the 14th year of their career.

In other changes:

—The society has created the Clinical Research Training Grants for Junior Faculty, a program intended to combine the previous Physician Research

Training Award, Junior Clinical Research Award, and Clinical Oncology Career Development Award into a single new grant.

The program is available for individuals with doctoral or equivalent degrees during the first four years of a faculty appointment who want to develop their clinical research skills to qualify as fully independent investigators. Funding will be available for clinical and epidemiological cancer research, including psychosocial, behavioral, health services and health policy research.

—The new Research Professorship and Clinical Research Professorship grants, will be limited to outstanding mid-career scientists for an initial five-year period with a single competitive five year renewal.

—The society has discontinued Clinical Oncology Career Development Awards; Clinical Oncology Fellowships; Cytotechnology Training Grants; International Fellowships; Junior Clinical Research Awards; Junior Faculty Research Awards; Physician Research Training Awards; and Scholar Awards.

—No additional Professors of Clinical Oncology and Professors of Oncology Nursing will be appointed unless funded entirely by the society’s divisions.

“One of the biggest gaps the society’s newly refocused research program now addresses is funding the work of beginning investigators,” Laszlo said.

“The future of cancer control lies with the next generation of researchers and teachers, the very people least likely to receive funding by other agencies,” he said.

Targeted Research

In another change, the society will promote targeted research in areas of high priority and opportunity, which will help the society find answers quickly to highly selected questions.

All research applications, including targeted research, will continue to be peer-reviewed.

“To fulfill unmet needs in cancer prevention and technology transfer over a range of cancer issues, the society is increasing its emphasis on psychosocial, behavioral, and health care policy research,” Laszlo said.

In addition to external funding, the society recently created a new intramural research unit to conduct psychosocial and behavioral research and help integrate findings into ACS programs aimed at cancer prevention, detection, and treatment.

"These exciting changes will re-emphasize our commitment to research and put maximum resources where they will do the most good," Laszlo said.

The Research Development Program, which makes funds available for promising, cutting edge projects, will be renamed the Research Opportunity Fund to reflect the goal of the program.

The advisory panel recommended that as much as 1% of the society's research budget should be available for Laszlo's office to fund risky but promising projects.

"In these times of rapid change and great opportunity in biomedical research, the ability to quickly fund potentially important, new projects may create opportunities and rapid progress in new research areas," the advisory panel said in a report.

Psychosocial, Behavioral Research

In other highlights, the advisory committee recommended that:

—ACS should devote at least 5% of extramural research funding initially be placed in psychosocial, behavioral, and policy research.

—The society's intramural research should undergo the same rigorous level of peer review as applicants for extramural research.

—ACS should participate in outside collaborations such as the ASSIST tobacco control trial with NCI and the breast and cervical cancer detection programs with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

—The few ACS divisions that fund research grants should delegate such programs to the society's national office.

"The [committee] believes that even though it has been useful in the past to devote funds at the division level to extramural research, it is not equitable or efficient for a few divisions to create individual infrastructures to perform peer review and to sequester funds restricted to local research," the report said.

The committee recommended a three-year phase-out period for such grants.

"Divisions are encouraged to use unrestricted donations to fund those local research projects that have been approved through the National peer-review process," the report said.

Additional information is available from the ACS office of extramural grants and awards, tel.: 404/329-7558; WWW: <http://www.cancer.org>; e-mail: grants@cancer.org.

French Cancer Group Vows To Spend More On Research

The Association for Research Against Cancer, France's largest cancer society, has promised to increase spending on cancer research following a report that criticized the group for excessive advertising and administrative expenses.

The organization also replaced its president, Jacques Crozumarie, who founded the ARC in 1966. The actions came during a board of directors meeting Jan. 3.

The independent French Accounting Court found the group spends only about a quarter of its money on research.

Almost 70 percent of the association's 1993 budget of \$91.6 million went toward advertising and public relations, while 27 percent of the money raised, or \$25 million, funded research, the report said.

Similar percentages were found for the years 1990 through 1992, the Paris newspaper Liberation reported Jan. 4.

According to the audit, the ARC practiced dubious accounting procedures to hide its expenses. Advertising costs, for example, were listed as information and prevention expenses, said the agency, the French equivalent of the General Accounting Office.

Olivier Metzner, a lawyer for the ARC, questioned the figures. The ARC spent at least 50 percent of its 1993 budget on research, he said.

Leon Schwartzberg, a cancer researcher and one of six people named to a new committee that will take control of the organization, said the group would increase its spending on research.

"We hope that during the next few years 70 percent of the funds will go for research," Schwartzberg said. "We are going to reexamine the way this organization works from top to bottom."

Cigarette Smoking Increases Among Youth, Survey Finds

Rates of cigarette smoking among high school students increased last year, while students' perceptions of the dangers of tobacco use decreased, according to the results of an annual survey released last month by the US Department of Health and Human Services.

The 21st annual Monitoring the Future Survey,

conducted by the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research under a grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, found that rates of cigarette smoking increased among high school seniors, with 64.2 percent reporting lifetime use of cigarettes, up from 62 percent in 1994. Survey findings include:

—Rates of cigarette smoking for 12th grade students increased for lifetime use, current use (at least once in the 30 days prior to the survey) and daily prevalence measures between 1994 and 1995. Daily smoking among 12th graders increased from 19.4 percent in 1994 to 21.6 percent in 1995. Current use increased from 31.2 percent in 1994 to 33.5 percent last year.

—Among 10th grade students, current use of cigarettes increased from 25.4 percent to 27.9 percent, and daily use increased from 14.6 percent to 16.3 percent.

—Among African-American 10th graders, 11.5 percent reported they had smoked in the past 30 days, compared to 6.6 percent in 1992.

For information on obtaining copies of the Monitoring the Future Survey, contact the HHS public relations office, tel: 301/443-6245.

Coordinated Budget For R&D Urged In NAS-IOM Report

Federal policy-makers need to adopt a new way of budgeting the funding for science and technology if the US is to remain the world leader in research and development during a time of severe fiscal constraints, according to a congressionally requested report by a joint committee of the National Academies of Sciences and Engineering and the Institute of Medicine.

The new approach would include combining the many disjointed pieces of federal science and technology funding into a single budget picture, funding the best projects and people, and cutting ineffective or outdated activities to free funds for important new opportunities.

“By any measure, the federal government’s investments in science and technology since World War II have been a spectacular success, producing enormous benefits for the nation,” said committee chair Frank Press, former president of the National Academy of Sciences and currently senior fellow at the Carnegie Institution of Washington. “However,

the question now facing the country is how best to continue this success when factors such as the severe budget deficit, the end of the Cold War, and the growth of global competition are bringing unprecedented changes to society and to science and technology.”

More Accurate Figures Needed

The first step, the committee said, is for the federal government to calculate more accurately its funding for science and technology. Federal research and development expenditures currently are reported as being more than \$70 billion annually.

However, the committee says this figure is misleading since almost half is spent on activities—such as establishing production lines and developing operational systems for new aircraft and weapons systems—that do not involve the creation of new knowledge or technologies. Because these activities focus on existing technologies, they do not conform to the usual meaning of R&D and should not be included when evaluating federal R&D. Leaving them out provides the true federal science and technology (FS&T) budget of \$35 billion to \$40 billion.

The federal government should use this FS&T figure as part of a more coherent budgeting process, the committee said. Currently, the research and development budget is an aggregation of agency budgets; it is not considered an integrated whole by either the executive or legislative branches.

The President should present to Congress a comprehensive annual FS&T budget that discusses areas of increased and reduced emphasis, the report said. This FS&T budget should be considered as a whole at the beginning of the congressional budget process before it is divided among the appropriations subcommittees.

Federal departments and agencies, in turn, should make their funding decisions based on criteria that follow those used by the President and the Congress. Such a process would allow trade-offs to be made across agencies, programs, and research institutions, freeing funds for new initiatives by reducing or ending projects that have become a lower priority.

The President and Congress should use this new budget process to ensure that the US is pre-eminent in selected fields of science and technology that are especially promising or are important for achieving national goals, the report said.

Expert panels should be assembled under the

auspices of the White House to make international comparisons and to recommend changes.

Key Principles For Budget Decisions

The federal government should use these key principles in making FS&T budget decisions, the report said:

- Preference should be given to funding projects and people rather than institutions, thereby promoting the quality and flexibility of research.

- Competitive merit review should be the basis for allocating funds, except when the purpose or nature of the work make even-handed competition infeasible.

- R&D capacity should remain associated with the agencies whose missions require it. The resulting pluralism of agencies and research institutions fosters creativity, cross-fertilization, and flexibility. The committee noted that a more coherent budgeting process along with a more competitive distribution of funds can accomplish more than establishing a federal Department of Science.

- Academic research generally should receive priority for funding. This allows agencies the flexibility to easily shift funding when priorities change, and provides quality control through grant competition and rigorous peer review.

- The federal government should encourage, but not directly fund, private-sector technology development, with two exceptions: in pursuit of the government's own missions—such as weapons development or space flight—or where government participation is essential for the development of new enabling, or broadly applicable, technologies.

- Existing federal laboratories should undergo renewed scrutiny, with the possibility of redirecting or eliminating resources when requirements have diminished or if external reviewers deem them less effective than other alternatives.

The study was requested by the Senate Appropriations Committee in October 1994. It was funded by NIH, the Department of Defense, National Science Foundation, and National Research Council.

The report, *Allocating Federal Funds for Science and Technology*, is available from the National Academy Press, tel 202/334-3313 or 1-800-624-6242. The cost of the report is \$27 (prepaid) plus shipping charges of \$4 for the first copy and \$.50 for each additional copy. The report is available at no charge on the World Wide Web at <http://www.nas.edu/nap/online/fedfunds>.

Letter to the Editor

Paul Bunn: Respected Leader, Clinician, Patient Advocate

To the Editor:

This letter is in response to the recent issue of **The Cancer Letter** dealing with the Oncologic Drugs Advisory Committee meeting Oct. 16-17, 1995, chaired by Dr. Paul Bunn (**The Cancer Letter**, Oct. 20, 1995).

The undersigned have known Dr. Bunn for over a decade. Dr. Bunn is the Director of the Univ. of Colorado Cancer Center, and in that capacity is the leader of over 280 research scientists, clinicians, and other professionals.

He is respected for his direction, ability to develop a collegial atmosphere, compassion, intelligence and morality. When Dr. Bunn chairs our many Cancer Center-related meetings, he encourages our input and values our comments and ideas.

Like any effective leader, he maintains direction as well as a timetable. Dr. Bunn is a patient advocate and outstanding clinician.

We can assure you that any concerns raised about his leadership and actions during the ODAC Board Meeting are misperceptions.

Associate Directors, Univ. of Colorado Cancer Center:

Dennis Ahnen

Associate Professor of Medicine

Richard Bakemeier

Professor of Medicine

E. David Crawford

Professor of Surgery

Tom Kean

David Patterson

Professor of Biochemistry, Biophysics, & Genetics

David Pettijohn

Professor of Biochemistry, Biophysics, & Genetics

Gail Silber

NCI Contract Awards

Title: Resources for procurement of human tissues from donors with an epidemiology profile.

Contractor: Georgetown Univ., \$400,151.

Title: Mechanisms of chemical carcinogenesis in Old World monkeys.

Contractor: Bioqual Inc., Rockville, MD, \$3,266,150.