

Statements from the President's Cancer Panel

*President's Cancer Panel
Strategies for Maximizing the Nation's Investment in Cancer
January 28, 2008*

The President's Cancer Panel held the fourth and final meeting of its 2007-2008 series on *Strategies for Maximizing the Nation's Investment in Cancer* on January 28, 2008, in New Orleans, Louisiana. As part of this series, invited participants explored what changes to the current system of cancer research and care would have the largest impact on cancer morbidity and mortality.

Similar to prior meetings, the Panel heard that there is a genuine need for better coordination and collaboration in cancer research. Incentives are needed to encourage scientists to share research data, collaborate in drug development, publish negative research results, and contribute to clinical trials research. While the varied components of the research enterprise make coordination challenging, investments must be maximized in order to sustain the next generation of discoveries in cancer prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. At a minimum, creating a broad template of critical gaps in cancer research would assist institutions/investigators in aligning their research agendas to best fill these voids.

Opportunities for change need to be identified across the cancer care continuum. Panel members heard again that smoking remains the single largest preventable cause of cancer; tobacco control and smoking cessation programs must be higher priorities. Applying what is already known to screen and detect cancer at its earliest stages has demonstrated public health benefits, making this another area where additional investment can yield proven results. Access to quality care following a cancer diagnosis has been deemed a moral imperative, yet severe fragmentation and disparities in cancer treatment persist. Finally, as more patients become long-term cancer survivors, new priorities related to their different set of medical and psychosocial needs are arising.

It was agreed that no single part of the cancer enterprise is able, or should be expected to, address all of these issues; change is a shared responsibility. Cancer is a public epidemic that kills more than 500,000 Americans every year; the lack of a coordinated effort supported by adequate resources and an aging population will likely cause this figure to rise. Political will is needed to elevate all facets of cancer research and care to a higher level of national priority. This includes recognizing that every American has been, is, or will likely be touched by cancer.

A new national agenda, driven by empowered leadership with clear priorities around which future generations can rally, will enable all parts of the cancer enterprise to take advantage of the tremendous scientific opportunities that exist and speak in a unified voice to address common goals. People invest in success and business models that

promise a return on investment. The agenda for cancer research and care must be based on meaningful, measurable objectives that inspire the necessary investment of talent, funding, and public trust.

This was the last meeting for Mr. Lance Armstrong, two-term Panel member and seven-time winner of the Tour de France. In his closing remarks he advocated for a “National Call to Action against Cancer,” stating that a victory plan to conquer cancer is critically needed. The Panel will summarize findings and recommendations from this series of meetings in its 2007-2008 annual report to the President.

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.