



A PATIENT-CENTERED FORUM OF NATIONAL ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS ADDRESSING PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES IN CANCER

July 7, 2004

Robert L. Comis, M.D.
President and Chairman of the Board
Coalition of National Cancer Cooperative Groups, Inc.
1818 Market Street
Suite 1100
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103

Dear Dr. Comis:

The undersigned organizations representing cancer patients, providers and researchers congratulate the Coalition of National Cancer Cooperative Groups for its work in developing the recently released "Harnessing the Science – Advancing Care: A Proposal to Improve the Publicly-Funded Cancer Clinical Research System." We are all aware of the contributions to progress against cancer that have been achieved because of the work of the federally-funded cancer cooperative groups, and the recommendations of the Proposal will help to ensure continuation of success against cancer.

In an era when federal research budgets are increasingly under scrutiny, it is more important than ever that research be conducted in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible. Recommendations for eliminating duplicative review, streamlining processes for initiation of trials and identifying appropriate research targets are obviously warranted and should be considered carefully by federal officials. We also support changes to enhance incentives for participation in cancer clinical research by both providers and patients and to create new opportunities for collaboration with the private sector, which is playing an ever greater role in the development of products to prevent, diagnose and treat cancer.

With respect to the difficult issue of funding for the many worthwhile activities undertaken by the cooperative groups specifically and by the national cancer program generally, it is essential to recognize that funds are not now, and probably will never be, adequate to meet all the competing needs of the research enterprise. Nevertheless, it remains critical that the available funds are allocated rationally, taking into account the contributions of the prospective recipients to the effort against cancer. The cooperative groups should fare well in any such assessment. We support greater funding for cooperative group trials, while strongly endorsing the recommendations to facilitate industry funding of cooperative group activities.

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Thanks to you and to all the Chairs of the cooperative groups for this important work and for the willingness of the Coalition to engage and inform the Cancer Leadership Council during the progress of the Proposal.

Sincerely,

Cancer Leadership Council

American Cancer Society
American Society of Clinical Oncology
Cancer Care, Inc.
Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation
Fertile Hope
International Myeloma Foundation
Kidney Cancer Association
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Lymphoma Research Foundation
Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship

National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Prostate Cancer Coalition
North American Brain Tumor Coalition
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Sarcoma Foundation of America
Us Too International Prostate Cancer
Education and Support Network
The Wellness Community
Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization

cc: Andrew von Eschenbach, M.D.
Anna Barker, Ph.D.