January 6, 2009

The Honorable Michael W. Hager
Acting Director
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Theodore Roosevelt Building
1900 E Street, NW
Room 5A09
Washington, D.C. 20415

Dear Mr. Hager:

The undersigned organizations advocate on behalf of cancer patients, providers and researchers to help ensure access to quality cancer care for all. One of the most important issues that we have addressed over the course of many years is access to clinical trials for patients with cancer. Our advocacy resulted in the groundbreaking clinical trial policy announced by the Medicare program in 2000. Under this policy, Medicare agreed to cover all routine patient care costs for patients wishing to enroll in clinical trials, and we are pleased to report that a number of private insurers and states have adopted policies consistent with Medicare’s.

Unfortunately, the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) is not among the insurers that have explicitly embraced a clinical trials policy guaranteeing coverage of routine patient care costs in clinical trials. We understand that FEHBP enrollees have been frequently denied such coverage and thus dissuaded from participating in potentially life-extending clinical trials. We also are aware that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has been contacted by The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society (LLS) and the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), urging adoption of a clinical trials policy consistent with that of Medicare. Our organizations fully endorse the arguments forwarded by LLS and ASCO and request that you proceed immediately to implement such a policy for OPM.

Failure to take this step will mean that many federal employees are deterred from participating in clinical research, a result that is negative not only for them as individual patients but also for general progress against cancer. Obviously, the lack of a clinical trials policy has a disproportionate impact on clinical trials in areas with high
concentration of federal jobs, such as Washington, D.C., Baltimore, and their surrounding suburbs. We strongly urge you to adopt without delay a clinical trials policy for FEHBP like that of Medicare.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

CANCER LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Society for Therapeutic Radiology & Oncology
Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network
Breast Cancer Network of Strength
C3: Colorectal Cancer Coalition
Cancer Care
The Children's Cause for Cancer Advocacy
Coalition of Cancer Cooperative Groups
International Myeloma Foundation
Kidney Cancer Association
Lance Armstrong Foundation
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
The Lung Cancer Alliance
Lymphoma Research Foundation

Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Comprehensive Cancer Network
National Lung Cancer Partnership
National Patient Advocate Foundation
North American Brain Tumor Coalition
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Prevent Cancer Foundation
Sarcoma Foundation of America
Susan G. Komen for the Cure Advocacy Alliance
US TOO International Prostate Cancer Education and Support Network
The Wellness Community