



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

May 31, 2001

The Honorable Tommy Thompson
Secretary, Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Room 615-F - HHH Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Thompson:

Many cancer patients received good news earlier this month when they learned that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had approved in record time a new anti-cancer drug to treat chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML). This drug has been awaited with anticipation by many patients, not only because it is a targeted, highly effective and mostly non-toxic therapy for CML but also because it is showing great promise in clinical trials for other types of cancer.

The FDA effort to review and approve this important new drug so rapidly -- two-and-a-half months from submission -- is a tribute to the leadership and staff of the Oncology Drug Products Division. Under the guidance of the Division Director, Dr. Richard Pazdur, there has been a concerted campaign to open lines of communication with patient advocates and others in the cancer community, and obviously the efficiency of the Division in its review responsibilities is at an unprecedented level.

Secretary Thompson, we also applaud your leadership in allowing such expeditious access to a life-extending cancer therapy. This new drug is only the first of many new targeted products that hold great promise for people with cancer, and we are gratified that those who are in positions to influence policy both in the Department and in FDA place appropriate emphasis on efficient and timely review of potentially life-extending new drugs. Hopefully, this new drug will signal the advent of new approaches to cancer therapy that better address the needs of cancer patients.

Sincerely,

Cancer Leadership Council

Alliance for Lung Cancer Advocacy, Support, and Education
American Cancer Society
American Society of Clinical Oncology
American Society for Therapeutic Radiology & Oncology, Inc.
Association of American Cancer Institutes
Cancer Care, Inc.
Cancer Research Foundation of America
The Children's Cause, Inc.
Coalition of National Cancer Cooperative Groups
Colorectal Cancer Network
Cure For Lymphoma Foundation
International Myeloma Foundation
Kidney Cancer Association
Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation
National Alliance of Breast Cancer Organizations
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Patient Advocate Foundation
National Prostate Cancer Coalition
North American Brain Tumor Coalition
Oncology Nursing Society
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation
US-TOO International, Inc.
The Wellness Community