

Maintain Federal Funding for Cancer Research

Background

The doubling of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) budget from 1999 to 2003 revolutionized biomedical research and cancer research. In fact, research funded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) has played a role in every major advance related to cancer prevention, detection and treatment, as well as contributing to breakthroughs for many other diseases. We recognize that Congress is facing difficult budget decisions, but reductions in funding for NIH and the National Cancer Institute (NCI) will lead to the decrease of purchasing power and slowing advances in cancer prevention and treatment.

- **Erosion of the cancer research infrastructure will have serious long-term consequences.** Once gone, it will take years to rebuild and critical opportunities to advance patient care will be lost.
- **Funding must keep pace with opportunity and need.** We are in a time of unprecedented opportunity because of our growing understanding of cancer biology. It is important that we leverage our knowledge to increase treatment opportunities for patients. Congress must protect the investment in NIH and NCI by ensuring that clinical research is adequately supported.
- **Funding Cancer Research Ensures Breakthroughs in Cancer Care.** Breakthroughs in cancer treatment cannot emerge without consistent and predictable investment at the federal level over the course of several years. Major advances in cancer treatment will not occur if funding remains flat or if funding is reduced.
- **Sustained growth in the national investment in cancer research is needed.** Finding a cure for cancer is a marathon not a sprint. Critical research is leading to promising therapies.
- **Biomedical research is an economic stimulus.** NIH and NCI should be given the highest priority possible in funding. Many researchers, lab technicians, assistants, and other medical professionals enjoy careers in the biomedical field, thanks to funds from NIH. Local communities also benefit from having research institutions affecting their economies.
- **Cancer research leads to advances in combating other diseases.** Patients with heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, autism, HIV, and other illnesses have benefited from cancer research.

ASCO calls on Congress to sustain these critical investments at NIH and NCI with predictable and sustainable future funding increases and urges research funding to be focused on:

- ***Funding the federal clinical trial system to translate basic discoveries into benefits for patients.*** Federally funded research helps us understand how to use new cancer treatments to improve care and answer comparative effectiveness questions by comparing one treatment to another and combining treatment approaches, e.g., surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy.
- ***Increasing patient participation in cancer clinical trials.*** Insurers should cover patients' routine costs of participation in clinical trials, such as doctor's visits, chemotherapy administration, and monitoring tests.
- ***Enhancing investigator support and training.*** NIH provides funding to ensure development of the next generation of investigators, which ensures the best minds of clinical and translational research are in the United States.
- ***Supporting infrastructure linking registries, biorepositories, and electronic health records.*** Private institutions and community-based networks are investing in electronic infrastructure to enable data sharing, linking clinical and research information. ASCO and NCI are creating the standards to enable information sharing across all settings in which oncology care is delivered – academic centers, community hospitals, and private practices.