

CHARLENE MIERS FOUNDATION FOR CANCER RESEARCH
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For Learning for Life

February 7, 2011

Harold Varmus, M.D.
Director
National Cancer Institute
31 Center Drive, Suite 11A48
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

National Cancer Institute
Provocative Questions Project
Contribution Advancing Science Honor (CASH)/ Prize

Dear Dr. Varmus:

We suggest the National Cancer Institute (NCI), National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Academy of Sciences recommend to the President and Congress that a program be established for honoring and awarding a medal and monetary prize to scientists who contribute to achieving important goals of the National Cancer Program by finding answers to questions on cancer to be selected and asked in the NCI Provocative Questions Project, described in the enclosed announcement.

Awarding monetary prizes would be consistent with the announced objective of the NCI Provocative Questions Project. It would reflect scientific importance, provide increased incentive to scientists to make major contributions to cancer research by finding answers to the kind of questions to be asked in the project that will lead to dramatic progress in prevention and cure of the disease, and recognize and reward scientists finding answers for their achievements.

The Noble Prize for medicine is understood to presently include a cash award of approximately \$1.5 million. We recommend that at least an equivalent amount be paid to any scientist who provides an answer to the provocative "game-changing scientific questions" the NCI envisions asking in the NCI Provocative Questions Project. As a recipient of the Nobel Prize we hope you will endorse the idea of giving similar awards with respect to the project as something which can enhance accomplishment of its vital scientific objective.

In considering this proposal we have read that the President has specifically called upon governmental agencies such as the NCI and NIH to increase and harness innovation through prizes and challenges. We enclose a copy of the President's *Strategy for American Innovation*, released in September 2009, and a memorandum of the Office and Management and Budget in

2010, discussing how prizes provided by agencies or public-private partnerships can and should be offered to encourage and foster important discovery. We believe this approach could have no more fitting place for implementation than in the drive to find the cause and cure of cancer being led by the NCI through the NCI Provocative Questions Project.

That level of recognition and reward for those making urgently needed discoveries of most difficult questions on cancer is warranted and appropriate and hopefully would lead to saving millions of lives in the United States and throughout the world.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Miers, Jr.', written over a horizontal line.

Sheppard F. Miers, Jr.
Director
Charlene Miers Foundation
for Cancer Research

Enclosure

cc: Shannon K. Bell, MSW
Ms. Gwen Darien
Bruce A. Chabner, M. D.
William H. Goodwin, Jr., M.B.A.
Robert A. Ingram, M. B. A.
Phillip A. Sharp, Ph.D.