

Charlene Miers Foundation for Cancer Research

100 West Fifth Street, Suite 1100
Tulsa, Oklahoma 74103-4217
918-595-4834
www.cmfcfr.org
email:smiers@gablelaw.com

November 5, 2010

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

Re: NCI Bypass Budget FY 2012; Proposed Answering
of Provocative Research Questions on Cancer

Dear Dr. Varmus:

As a member of One Voice Against Cancer (OVAC) our organization is a signatory to OVAC's letter to you of October 26, 2010, with regard to the National Cancer Institute's annual Bypass Budget, a copy of which is enclosed.

Our organization supports and endorses all that is stated in OVAC's letter to you about the significance of the NCI Bypass Budget for FY 2012, which you can submit directly to the President under federal law enacted by the National Cancer Act of 1971.

We also support your announced plans to revitalize and intensify scientific efforts at the National Cancer Institute, including those you mentioned at the NCI Town Hall Meeting on July 21, 2010. Your plan for NCI to define provocative answerable questions to advance the progress of the National Cancer Program in defeating cancer through efforts of individual scientists is excellent. (Perhaps this process could be conducted as the NCI *Advancing Science Asking Provocative (ASAP) Questions About Cancer* program.)

Our organization respectfully proposes two other subjects for your consideration related to the NCI ByPass Budget and in connection with the proposed effort to ask and answer provocative questions about cancer.

First, we suggest and recommend that NCI consider having the NCI Bypass Budget be submitted in the form of a multi-year budget of planned activities and operations for both FY 2012, and estimates or forecasts of the level of Congressional appropriations that will be needed in subsequent fiscal years in which scientific research will be conducted that is either now in progress or is planned in order for NCI to carry out the National Cancer Program under the Act.

Second, we suggest that a question, that pertains to reason for this letter and the enclosed OVAC letter, be considered in connection with the new study of provocative questions about cancer that you have proposed. While not “provocative” in a purely scientific sense, we believe it is with respect to maximizing the ability of NCI to conduct the National Cancer Program, including earliest possible accomplishment of the kind of fundamental research and discovery you have recommended.

It is our understanding that completion of research projects about cancer such as those you have proposed often takes a period of more than one calendar or fiscal year. Thus, the question we suggest be considered by NCI, with assistance of others, is whether there are or could be feasible new alternatives for providing (or supplementing) a more predictable source of long-term funding of NCI and cancer research? Thus, in connection with identifying and answering a set of provocative questions on the disease, we recommend NCI consider the current budget and fiscal processes for funding cancer research at and through NCI. We suggest that the question of improving necessary funding of essential research to cure cancer should be studied and recommendations made from the very pertinent perspective of scientists and the Federal government institution primarily responsible for reviewing, funding and coordinating their research projects and achievements.

As a part of that, we recommend that NCI also determine and quantify as specifically as possible the total estimated cost and period needed for identifying, studying and answering each of the key unanswered provocative questions about cancer that you finally determine should be answered. We believe a budget estimate of that financial commitment would reflect significance of the intended goals of scientific effort involved in descriptions of it which NCI could provide to the President, Congress and the general public.

As the enclosed letter from OVAC indicates, FY 2012 presents a very challenging budget environment at a time when Congress will be forced to allocate limited resources. We believe that may be a recurring situation in later fiscal years in the foreseeable future. Which demonstrates the importance of analyzing alternatives for fiscal planning, budgeting and appropriation processes to pay for finding answers to provocative answerable scientific questions on cancer which you intend for NCI to accomplish.

Thank you for considering this letter and for your service and leadership in the national effort to control and cure cancer.

Very truly yours,



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

Enclosure



October 26, 2010

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

Dear Dr. Varmus:

As members of One Voice Against Cancer (OVAC) we are writing with regard to the National Cancer Institute's annual Bypass Budget. As you know, OVAC is a collaboration of public interest groups representing millions of cancer researchers, patients, survivors and their families throughout the nation, and we thank you again for taking time to speak to our group last month.

The National Cancer Act of 1971 gave NCI the unique ability to communicate directly with the President and Congress about the ongoing strategic effort to defeat cancer and to make specific and direct funding recommendations about how to achieve that goal.

FY 2012 presents a very challenging budget environment that only increases the value of a compelling argument presented to the President and Congress in a timely way. To have any real impact we feel it must be transmitted before Congress begins work on the FY 2012 budget in early February. Accordingly, we hope you would expedite the process so that it is received in a timely way.

We also feel that you will likely have to defend cancer research as a national priority. We are frequently faced with this same challenge in our advocacy efforts when we make the case to Congress for additional funding for cancer research. A comprehensive Bypass Budget not only aids NCI and the administration, but would greatly enhance our efforts as well.

Clearly, the advances supported by NCI over the past few years are creating new ways to prevent, detect, and treat cancer. At a time when Congress will be forced to allocate limited resources, we all must be able to demonstrate a return on past investment, and identify new diagnostic tools and treatments for consumers, along with efforts to develop and promote community-based research projects aimed at addressing health disparities. There is

promising research in genomics, proteomics, imaging, and nanotechnology for diseases ranging from glioblastoma, to pancreatic, to prostate cancer, along with efforts aimed at identifying and reducing cancer health disparities. The cancer community is often asked what we stand to lose absent adequate funding. Specific examples of newly discovered genes that are now being looked at as potential diagnostic or therapeutic targets or promising clinical trials currently in the pipeline are the surest way to answer this question.

We feel that even the biomedical research community as a whole will also need to be able to reflect on how funding directly impacts the lives of patients and those who would be patients. People enrolled in clinical trials are receiving hope as well as treatment, and they are essentially soldiers on the front-line of discovery in this fight. Research must be demonstrated to flow on a continuum toward breakthroughs. New discoveries like the Gardasil vaccine or treatments like Gleevec will not be replicated without a sustained commitment from Congress.

Again, we believe the Bypass Budget offers both an opportunity to state the case, and the opportunity to optimize everyone's advocacy efforts. Our sense from our discussion last month is that you recognize its value and will work to maximize it. We fully support you in this effort, and look forward to carrying the message to our elected officials.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Prostate Cancer Prevention (APCaP)
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Society for Radiation Oncology
Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum
Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network
Charlene Miers Foundation for Cancer Research
Colorectal Cancer Coalition
The Intercultural Cancer Council Caucus
International Myeloma Foundation
The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society
LIVESTRONG
Malecare Prostate Cancer Support
Men's Health Network
The National Alliance of State Prostate Cancer Coalitions (NASPCC)
National Coalition for Cancer Research (NCCR)
National Patient Advocate Foundation
Nevada Cancer Institute
Oncology Nursing Society
The Ovarian Cancer National Alliance
Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
Pennsylvania Prostate Cancer Coalition (PPCC)
Prevent Cancer Foundation
The Sarcoma Foundation of America
Society of Gynecologic Oncologists
Us TOO International Prostate Cancer Education and Support Network