



# International Cancer News

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## From The Globe

### CONGRESS ACCEPT NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE BUDGET PROPOSAL: NEW VENTURES CAN GO AHEAD

The National Cancer Institute's proposal for their cancer research budget for the fiscal year 1997/1998 has been approved by congress. The total amount totals \$2.382 billion.

In his original Budget Proposal, Dr Richard Klausner, Director of the National Cancer Institute, described the resources needed to allow current cutting-edge research to advance. But he also bid to break new ground in five areas which now can start. Altogether, the five new investment opportunities are expected to cost \$269,500 thousand for the fiscal year. This comes within the \$2.382 billion total the NCI is receiving.

In his original proposal, Dr Klausner stated: "In addition, we identify five areas of unprecedented cancer research opportunity which, if exploited, will greatly increase our capacity to reduce suffering due to cancer. We propose investment opportunities in understanding the genetic basis of cancer, in the development of early detection techniques, and in the accurate description of the behaviour of cancer in each affected individual and to determine the implications of these advances for prevention, detection, diagnosis and treatment."

The NCI goals within these five new areas are summarised below:

#### *Investigator-initiated research: a discovery engine*

Now, a major NCI goal is to accelerate the pace of the discovery and increase opportunities for individuals to contribute to cancer research. This goal reflects the recognition that there must

be commitment to fund an adequate number of research grants so that all promising ideas can be tested. The NCI aims to increase its funding of 25% of all grant applications to 33%.

Commenting upon this news, Professor Françoise Meunier, Director General of the EORTC, said, "This is very encouraging news. Such high commitment from the NCI to support clinical research will also promote high quality clinical research in Europe. Traditionally, it is difficult to get funding for clinical research compared with basic research. Yet it is vital. Progress in science does not mean progress in medicine."

#### *Cancer genetics*

The NCI goals are to identify every major human gene that predisposes to cancer; use this information to transform medical practice; and identify and solve psychosocial, ethical and legal issues associated with cancer genetics.

#### *Preclinical models of cancer*

New techniques are available allowing the genome of laboratory animals to be manipulated so that the cancers developed in animals are the same mutations that drive human disease. The NCI goal is to create animal models for human cancer based on knowledge of human cancer genes.



### Fertiliser Nitrate in Water Increases Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma

The more nitrate people consume in water, the greater their probability of developing non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (NHL).

This was the conclusion of scientists from the N.I., the University of Nebraska Medical Centre in Omaha, and Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore in their assessment of the average amount of nitrate consumed daily in tap water by Nebraska residents diagnosed with NHL and by a control group of persons without the disease who lived in the same area. Both groups used public water supplies.

Persons with NHL were twice as likely to be in the group that consumed the

highest levels of nitrate as those without the cancer.

"This is one of the first epidemiological studies to suggest a link between drinking-water nitrate and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma risk," said Dr Mary H. Ward, the study's first author [1]. She added that nitrate was a common contaminant of ground water in many areas of the country.

Possibly nitrate is the cause, but possibly it is only a marker variable that is correlated with another NHL risk factor that was not directly measured in the study. (The researchers did assess occupational pesticide exposure and found that it could not account for their results.)