NCI Director’s Report

Norman E. Sharpless, M.D.

1st Virtual Joint Meeting of NCI Board of Scientific Advisors & National Cancer Advisory Board

April 9, 2020
Today’s Meeting

Deputy Director’s Report – Dr. Doug Lowy

Update: NYU Coronavirus Activity – Dr. Dafna Bar-Sagi

Clinical Trial Policies – Dr. James Doroshow

Closed Session: Discussion of Research Efforts – Dr. Dinah Singer
NCI & COVID-19

• Today’s discussion is focused on SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19
• We will discuss the impact of the pandemic on NCI and the extramural community.
• COVID-19 has affected everything we do at NCI. We’ve adapted how we do business, and we’re embracing opportunities to contribute to COVID research.
• Cancer research and cancer care remain JOB #1 at NCI.
• Even during these difficult times, we are still making progress toward our mission of reducing cancer suffering
NCI & COVID-19

Intramural Research Program
*Leaders in virology research*
• Lowy, Schiller, Varmus, Gallo, Broder

Frederick National Laboratory for Cancer Research
• *Facilities: CryoEM, Serology, more*
• *Unique contracting authorities*
• *Robust collaborative relationships*

Grantee Institutions and Networks
*diverse skills and powerful technology*
NCI Operations: Telework, *Minimal Maintenance*, Critical Clinical Care
Contact Us for Help

Call 1-800-4-CANCER
(1-800-422-6237)
Mon - Fri
9 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET

Live Chat
LiveHelp
Mon - Fri
9 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET

Email Us
NCIinfo@nih.gov
Information for people with cancer

Coronavirus: What People with Cancer Should Know

ON THIS PAGE

- What is coronavirus, or COVID-19?
- If I have cancer, am I at higher risk of getting or dying from COVID-19?
- If I have cancer, how can I protect myself?
- I receive cancer treatment at a medical facility. What should I do about getting treatment?
- I participate in a clinical trial at a medical facility. What should I do?
- What should I do if I have symptoms of an infection?
- What if I have additional questions?
Information for Grantees

- grants.nih.gov
- grantspolicy@nih.gov
- cancer.gov/coronavirus-researchers

**NCI Bottom Line**
NIH Guidance for Grantees

- Extended deadlines for applications, no justification required
- Use of NIH grant funds for salaries and stipends
- Flexibility regarding project extensions and accommodating unanticipated costs
- Extensions of post-award reporting requirements
- Numerous flexibilities regarding expenditures of funds
- Extensions for early stage investigator eligibility due to COVID-19-related disruptions will be considered
- NIH will be flexible with extending time constraints for fellowship, career development, and training awards, including phased awards
Leadership Update

Daniel Gallahan, Ph.D.
Director, Division of Cancer Biology
House Appropriations Labor-HHS Subcommittee Hearing
FY 2021 NIH Budget Request - March 4, 2020

- Participated alongside Dr. Collins, and IC Directors from NIAID, NHLBI, NIDA, and NICHD
- 8 questions including from the Chair and Ranking Member
- Topics included NCI’s increase in applications, CCDI update, clinical trials, and kidney cancer
- Senate budget hearing postponed indefinitely as Congress determines next steps in Appropriations process during COVID-19
Legislative Updates: Three Aid Packages to Address COVID-19

Phase 1 (March 3rd)
• $8.3B in funding for health agencies – vaccine development and testing, plus small business loan subsidies ($2.2B to CDC, $836M to NIAID & NIEHS)

Phase 2 (March 18th)
• $100B in tax credits for employers offering paid sick leave, increases to unemployment benefits, and food assistance

Phase 3: CARES Act (March 27th)
• Largest stimulus in U.S. history - $2 trillion in loans and support for industry and small business
• $130B in aid for hospitals, doctors, nurses, and health centers
• $4.3B to CDC, $945.5M to NIH (NIAID, NHLBI, NIBIB, NCATS, NLM, NIH OD), $80M to FDA
• Telehealth flexibilities, coverage of diagnostics and preventive services for COVID-19
• Direct payments to individuals, unemployment benefits, student loan deferral, election adjustments
Progress in Cancer Research
CD33 CAR T Trial

Study of Anti-CD33 Chimeric Antigen Receptor-Expressing T Cells (CD33CART) in Children and Young Adults With Relapsed/Refractory Acute Myeloid Leukemia

ClinicalTrials.gov Identifier: NCT03971799

Principal Investigators:
• Nirali Shah, MD, MHSc, NCI
• Richard Aplenc, MD, PhD, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Steps per day and all-cause mortality

NCI Press Release

Higher daily step count linked with lower all-cause mortality

Posted: March 24, 2020

Contact: NCI Press Office
240-760-6600

In a new study, higher daily step count was associated with lower mortality due to all causes. The research team, which included investigators from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), both parts of the National Institutes of Health, as well as from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), also found that higher step counts were associated with lower mortality from various diseases, including cancer.

The findings were presented at the American Cancer Society's Cancer Prevention Study II Alumni Conference and published online ahead of print in JAMA Internal Medicine on March 24, 2020. They are the latest results from the CooperativeStudy of Health and Retirement in the United States (CSHORE), a long-term study of nearly 38,000 persons ages 50 to 71 years that has followed participants since 1992.
Selumetinib & NF1

In NIH trial, selumetinib shrinks tumors, provides clinical benefit for children with NF1

Posted: March 18, 2020

In a study published in the New England Journal of Medicine, researchers reported findings from a Phase 2 trial showing that selumetinib, a selective MEK inhibitor, shrinks tumors and may provide clinical benefit for children with NF1. The trial involved 11 children with NF1 and inoperable plexiform neurofibromas. The researchers hope to conduct a larger study to confirm these findings and to further investigate the potential benefits of selumetinib for children with NF1.

Dr. Brigitte Widemann with Travis Carpenter, who received selumetinib for NFI at NIH. Credit, National Cancer Institute

Contact: NCI Press Office
240-760-6600

Selumetinib in Children with Inoperable Plexiform Neurofibromas


The New England Journal of Medicine

Original Article

Results of the trial were published March 18, 2020, in the New England Journal of Medicine.
Metabolism & metastasis

Metabolic heterogeneity confers differences in melanoma metastatic potential

Alpaslan Tasdogan, Brandon Faubert, Vijayashree Ramesh, Jessalyn M. Ubellacker, Bo Shen, Ashley Solmonson, Malea M. Murphy, Zhimin Gu, Wen Gu, Misty Martin, Stacy Y. Kasitinon, Travis Vandergriff, Thomas P. Mathews, Zhiyu Zhao, Dirk Schadendorf, Ralph J. DeBerardinis & Sean J. Morrison

Changes in Metabolism Help Melanomas Spread

Skin cancer, can be treated if it’s caught early. But once the tumor to other parts of the body, it becomes highly lethal.

Researchers provide important insights into how melanomas become more likely to spread, or metastasize. They showed that melanoma cells to a molecule called MCT1.

This altered metabolism, the ability to take up an amino acid, which increases their invasive properties. This altered metabolism, melanoma cells survive as they travel to form secondary tumors.

PET/CT scan of a patient with metastatic melanoma.
Discussion