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CONTACT:
Nicole Gottlieb
NCI Press Office
(301) 496-6641

National Cancer Institute Funds Four Centers of Excellence in Cancer Communications Research

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) today announced plans to fund four Centers of Excellence in Cancer Communications Research (CECCR). The CECCR initiative is the centerpiece of NCI's Extraordinary Opportunity in Cancer Communications (EOCC), a broad initiative that supports research and outreach aimed at increasing the knowledge about, tools for, access to, and use of cancer communications by the public, patients, survivors, and health professionals. The goal of the EOCC is to understand and apply the most effective communications approaches to maximize access to and use of major cancer information by all who need it. The EOCC has been the launching pad for initiatives such as NCI's Health Information National Trends Survey and projects to bridge the "digital divide."

"The launch of the \$40 million CECCR initiative," said Robert Croyle, Ph.D., acting director of NCI's Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences, "exemplifies NCI's leadership role as one of the nation's primary supporters of cutting-edge scientific research on health communication." The four centers' projects will produce new knowledge about and techniques for communicating complex health information to the public, with the potential for achieving reductions in the U.S. cancer burden.

The CECCR initiative solicited applications for specialized center (P50) grants that include three or more individual, hypothesis-driven research projects, small pilot projects, and a program for training cancer communication scientists. After receiving approval in June 2003 from the National Cancer Advisory Board, NCI announced that each of the four awarded centers will receive \$10 million over five years.

The NCI Centers of Excellence in Cancer Communications Research are:

- The University of Michigan, Principal Investigator Victor J. Strecher, Ph.D.
- The University of Pennsylvania, Principal Investigator Robert C. Hornik, Ph.D.

(more)

- St. Louis University, Principal Investigator Matthew W. Kreuter, Ph.D., MPH.
- The University of Wisconsin, Madison, Principal Investigator David H. Gustafson, Ph.D.

The centers' projects will focus on topics such as:

- Information-seeking related to prostate, breast, and colorectal cancer.
- Decision aids concerning tamoxifen use among women at high risk for breast cancer.
- Development and evaluation of an intervention to increase fruit and vegetable intake among African Americans.
- Anti-smoking media campaigns for adolescents.
- Coverage of cancer-related issues in African-American newspapers.
- Development and evaluation of new interactive health communication systems.
- The role of cultural factors in response to colorectal cancer risk reduction messages.

The novelty and scope of this initiative reflects the enormous potential of cancer communication science and technology to improve health, and NCI's recognition that effective communications can and should be used to narrow the gap between discovery and delivery and to reduce health disparities among U.S. citizens. It is expected that the centers' unique transdisciplinary efforts will result in new and improved theories, methods, communication tools, and interventions. The centers also will provide training for students and young investigators in multidisciplinary team environments.

According to K. Viswanath, Ph.D., NCI's acting associate director of behavioral research and a co-leader of the EOCC, "These are exciting times for those engaged in utilizing new interactive communication technologies for reducing the cancer burden. The work done by these centers will help us to understand how best to communicate effectively about cancer and cancer research, and to tailor these efforts for different target audiences. The utilization of this knowledge will ensure that the wealth of new information about cancer produced by scientific research will be both meaningful and useful to every person in America."

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For more information about NCI's Extraordinary Opportunity in Cancer Communications Research, visit <http://dccps.nci.nih.gov/eocc/index.html>.

For more information about cancer, visit NCI's Web site at <http://www.cancer.gov>.