

Director's Message

Each of us, in some way, has been touched by this terrible disease we call cancer. At the National Cancer Institute, we begin each day with an acute awareness of our responsibility to lead this country's researchers and cancer physicians in the difficult work of conducting quality research that continues to drive down cancer mortality.

This document takes an in-depth look at our nation's investment in cancer research, current and future. It tells the story of our work on numerous fronts to provide a scientific basis for more-successful outcomes tailored to the individual, along with our efforts to reduce the impact of cancer on the lives of all Americans and on our country's economy.

We live in a period of unparalleled scientific opportunity. The pace at which we accumulate new knowledge has never been so great, and it is making possible unprecedented opportunities to accelerate progress against cancer. At NCI, we support the strongest, most-promising research, and we continuously seek to leverage new knowledge, so that effective interventions can get to patients as quickly as possible.

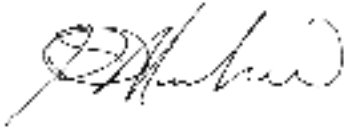
Scientists now understand that cancer is a disease of genetic changes that accumulate over a lifetime—or that add to genetic alterations we inherit. We are gaining new insight into the biological processes that render a cell malignant and into the complex interactions of the cancer cell with its microenvironment and host. By understanding the workings of a tumor and its biological support system, we are starting to develop highly targeted treatments that minimize harm to healthy tissue. We are now beginning to individualize cancer treatment for patients. We are also employing the skills, talents, and unique perspectives of experts in related scientific and technology fields, to share knowledge more extensively and diagnose cancers earlier.

The pages ahead highlight many accomplishments and opportunities, from broad analyses of cancer research trends to specific examples of targeted projects. We are confronting the rapidly approaching time when "access" to optimal state-of-the-art therapies and preventions may be the greatest determinant of mortality from cancer. To address this issue of access for all, we have developed a research pilot project with community-based cancer centers, to study the best ways to bring science to patients—wealthy or poor, young or old—in the communities where they live. This program also has the potential to harness electronic medical records and interconnected informatics systems, to create a national cohort of cancer patients.

Leadership that effectively advances cancer research requires disciplined fiscal management. In this era of essentially flat budgets, NCI's leadership team is carefully planning and optimally investing our research dollars. That means we must aggressively address NCI's strategic objectives, honor our commitment to a base of ongoing research, and fund critical new initiatives. At the same time, we must support the training and mentored research of new investigators, who will enhance our country's scientific capacity for years to come. With the input of researchers, advisory boards, and the larger cancer community, our leadership team is making difficult decisions among competing priorities. We will also work to foster responsible, productive partnerships with other government agencies, academia, and the private sector. And we seek ways to share the story of scientific opportunity and its immense potential economic impact, with a stronger, more unified voice throughout the cancer community.

The Institute's investment proposal for Fiscal Year 2008 is outlined at the end of this document. In our judgment, the proposed budget will enable NCI to ensure outcomes from currently-funded research, fund key strategic new initiatives, and provide training support to draw the best minds to a field vital to our nation's health and economy.

Ultimately, we recognize our responsibility to the American people is to deliver return on investment. We hope this document will serve as an important guide to the President and Congress, as we strive to reduce the burden of cancer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John E. Niederhuber". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "N".

John E. Niederhuber, M.D.

October 2006

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