



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, September 21, 2004

CONTACT:
Don Ralbovsky
Bonnie Flock Kinney
301-496-5787
Website: <http://clinicalcenter.nih.gov>

NIH Opens New Clinical Research Hospital Sept. 22

The National Institutes of Health celebrates the opening of the Mark O. Hatfield Clinical Research Center on Wednesday, Sept. 22. This new hospital totally dedicated to clinical research - research involving patients - is the most significant addition to the NIH campus in more than 50 years and provides a unique opportunity for scientists, clinicians, and patients to study and conquer both chronic and acute disease in the 21st century.

"The Hatfield Center at the NIH represents an important investment in science and treatment on behalf of the American people. Through its doors will come patients, who in partnership with NIH's doctors, nurses and researchers, will try to find answers to some of the most perplexing questions in medicine," said HHS Secretary Tommy G. Thompson.

The 870,000-square-foot Hatfield Center connects to the existing Warren Grant Magnuson Clinical Center, which opened its doors to patients in 1953. In the 50 years since its opening, NIH has worked in partnership with more than 350,000 participants in clinical studies from every state in the U.S. and from around the world.

"We have patients who come here who've lost hope for any other treatment," said NIH Director Elias A. Zerhouni, M.D. "This is why we really are very pleased to have received the support of Congress, the support of the American public, and most importantly, the thousands of patients who come from all around the country and the world to participate as partners in clinical research."

Some NIH advances resulting from this partnership include:

- First cure of a solid tumor with chemotherapy
- First chemotherapy for childhood leukemia and Hodgkin's disease
- Discovery of evidence of a genetic component in schizophrenia
- First use of nitroglycerin for acute myocardial infarction
- First use of hydroxyurea to treat sickle cell anemia
- First gene therapy
- First successful replacement of a mitral valve
- First use of AZT to treat AIDS
- Development of screening tests for AIDS and hepatitis, which reduced the transmission rate of transfusion-transmitted hepatitis from 30 percent to near zero

“Patients are our partners in discovery and at the heart of the Clinical Center’s mission,” said Clinical Center Director John I. Gallin, M.D. “This new building will be a remarkable resource for science because it has been designed in concert with the patients who come here and the scientists and clinicians who work with them to find new and better ways to prevent and treat disease.”

The Hatfield Center will continue to set the pace for developing the most promising medical advances. Annually, more than 1,000 clinical studies are conducted at NIH and the proximity of labs, equipment, and patient care units will help to rapidly move biomedical laboratory findings into the mainstream of medical practice — carrying on the "bench-to-bedside" tradition of the original NIH Clinical Center.

In 1989, an assessment of the existing Clinical Center’s building systems concluded that the hospital had 12-15 years of useful life left. In 1994, by mandate of Congress, NIH convened an external advisory committee to conduct an in-depth review of the agency’s intramural program. This committee strongly endorsed NIH’s research program and recommended the immediate revitalization of the Clinical Center through construction of a new 242-bed hospital, followed by the phased renovation of the existing Clinical Center. Former NIH Directors Bernadine Healy, M.D. and Harold Varmus, M.D. provided crucial support to this effort.

Named in honor of former Senator Mark O. Hatfield, who served in Congress for 30 years and provided steadfast support to NIH and clinical research, the new hospital will allow for cutting-edge research and patient care in the 21st century. The Hatfield Center will open with approximately 240 inpatient beds and 80 day-hospital stations. Laboratories and patient rooms are highly flexible and can quickly adapt to meet new requirements and changing priorities.

The Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Partnership designed the Hatfield Center, winning an international design competition among 29 firms.

Currently, laboratory and office moves are underway. Patients will move into the new hospital in December.

Senior officials, researchers, and patients will attend the opening ceremony on Sept. 22, including former Senator Hatfield, Secretary Thompson, and U.S. Representative C.W. Bill Young, Chairman, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is the primary Federal agency for conducting and supporting basic clinical and translational medical research. NIH is comprised of 27 institutes and centers and investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases.

###