

The U.S. National Cancer Institute

Key Points

- The U.S. National Cancer Institute (NCI) is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) (see Question 1).
- NCI was established by Congress in 1937 (see Question 2).
- NCI's main responsibilities include coordinating the National Cancer Program; conducting and supporting cancer-related research; training physicians and scientists; and disseminating state-of-the-art information about cancer detection, diagnosis, treatment, prevention, control, palliative care, and survivorship (see Question 3).
- Most of NCI's budget is used to fund grants and contracts to universities, medical schools, cancer centers, research laboratories, and private firms in the United States and about 60 other countries around the world (see Question 5).

1. What is the U.S. National Cancer Institute?

The U.S. National Cancer Institute (NCI) is 1 of 27 Institutes and Centers that comprise the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

2. When was NCI established?

NCI was established by Congress in the National Cancer Institute Act of 1937.

3. What are NCI's main responsibilities and activities?

NCI's initial responsibilities, as defined in the National Cancer Institute Act, included conducting and fostering cancer research; reviewing and approving grant-in-aid



applications to support promising research projects on the causes, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of cancer; collecting, analyzing, and disseminating the results of cancer research conducted in the United States and in other countries; and providing training and instruction in cancer diagnosis and treatment.

NCI's responsibilities were later expanded and strengthened in the National Cancer Act of 1971. In this legislation, Congress created the National Cancer Program and charged NCI with its coordination.

In fulfilling its responsibilities, NCI has built a national network that includes regional and community cancer centers, physicians who are cancer specialists, cooperative groups of clinical researchers, and volunteer and community outreach groups.

In addition, NCI has developed an infrastructure for discovery that consists of support mechanisms, organizations, and networks that link scientists, facilities, resources, and information. This infrastructure provides the foundation for basic, translational, and clinical research activities encompassing all aspects of cancer, including biology, genetics, epidemiology, detection, diagnosis, treatment, prevention, palliative care, and survivorship. NCI's infrastructure also supports training programs to ensure the continuous development of highly skilled researchers in basic, clinical, cancer control, behavioral, and population sciences. Each year the efforts of thousands of researchers supported by this infrastructure produce scientific advances in all areas of cancer research. Furthermore, NCI has initiated cancer control programs to hasten the application of knowledge gained through research.

The National Cancer Act of 1971 also expanded the scope of NCI's international activities to include support of cancer research outside the United States by highly qualified foreign nationals, collaborative research involving U.S. and foreign participants, and training of U.S. scientists abroad and foreign scientists in the United States.

Additional legislation (the current Public Health Service Act) expanded NCI's information dissemination activities to include providing information and education programs for patients and the public to help individuals take steps to reduce their risk of cancer, to make them aware of early detection techniques and motivate the appropriate utilization of these techniques, to help individuals deal with cancer if it strikes, and to provide information to improve long-term survival. In addition, NCI was charged with continuing and expanding programs to provide physicians and the public with state-of-the-art information about the treatment of individual types of cancer and to identify clinical trials that might benefit patients while advancing knowledge of cancer treatment.

4. Where is NCI located?

NCI is located at 9000 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20892.

5. What is NCI's annual budget?

In Fiscal Year 2007, the NCI budget was over \$4.79 billion, most of which was used to fund grants and contracts to universities, medical schools, cancer centers, research laboratories, and private firms in the United States and about 60 other countries around the world. The balance of the funds supported research activities conducted at NCI.

6. Is progress being made in the fight against cancer?

Because of the work of NCI scientists and cancer researchers throughout the United States and the rest of the world, real progress is being made against cancer. In the United States, the rate of new cancer cases overall has been declining since 1999, and the rate of cancer deaths overall has been decreasing for more than a decade. These trends reflect improvements in cancer treatment and advances in technology that have led to better tools for understanding, detecting, and diagnosing cancer. People with cancer are living longer and have a better quality of life than ever before. In 2007, there were nearly 12 million cancer survivors in the United States.

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Related NCI materials and Web pages:

- Fact Sheets About NCI, other fact sheets that provide information about NCI programs and activities (<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/NCI>)
- *NCI Community Cancer Centers Program Pilot: Questions and Answers*, information about an NCI program evaluating the feasibility of building a national network of community cancer centers to expand cancer research and deliver the latest, most advanced cancer care to a greater number of Americans in the communities where they live (<http://www.cancer.gov/newscenter/pressreleases/NCCCCPilotQandA>)
- Cancer Health Disparities, the NCI Web site's portal for information about the Institute's efforts to reduce the unequal burden of cancer in our society (<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/disparities>)
- Cancer.gov en español, NCI's Spanish-language Web site (<http://www.cancer.gov/espanol>)
- *NCI Annual Fact Book*, a collection of annual reports about how NCI has distributed its budget among various research programs and funding mechanisms (<http://obf.cancer.gov/financial/factbook.htm>)
- *NCI Cancer Bulletin*, a biweekly newsletter reporting the latest cancer research news from NCI (<http://www.cancer.gov/ncicancerbulletin/cancerbulletin>)
- *NCI International Portfolio*, a publication providing an overview of the breadth and depth of NCI's international collaborations, research, and cancer control activities (<http://www.cancer.gov/nci-international-portfolio>)

For more help, contact:

NCI's Cancer Information Service

Telephone (toll-free): 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

TTY (toll-free): 1-800-332-8615

LiveHelp[®] online chat: <https://cissecure.nci.nih.gov/livehelp/welcome.asp>

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