

ADMINISTRATIVE BACKGROUND

In its report language for the Fiscal Year 2002 appropriation for the National Institutes of Health, the House Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Committee stated:

“The Committee is aware that the Diabetes Research Working Group’s (DRWG) five-year strategic plan has aided in the advancement of diabetes research. To review the progress in both type 1 and type 2 diabetes research, the Committee requests the NIDDK coordinate the development of a trans-NIH report which highlights major research efforts that have been undertaken across the NIH relative to the DRWG’s key categories of scientific recommendations and which also highlights important research advances and new scientific opportunities that have emerged since issuance of the plan. This report should be submitted to the Committee by August 31, 2002.” (H.Rep. 107-229; pp. 67-68)

Consistent with this congressional language, the NIH has prepared this report, which describes program efforts, advances, and opportunities in diabetes research since the DRWG issued its five-year Strategic Plan in February 1999. As requested by the Committee, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) has coordinated the report’s development, with input from the other institutes and centers of the NIH, and also with broad input from eminent scientists external to the NIH.

The research opportunities and needs identified in the DRWG’s Strategic Plan were the culmination of a year-long planning process led by the sixteen members of the congressionally established DRWG, in consultation with other leading scientists and lay leaders in the diabetes community. Since 1999, the DRWG’s Strategic Plan has served as a major scientific guidepost to the NIH for diabetes research. In this regard, a critical mechanism for planning, coordinating and monitoring the development of the national diabetes research enterprise is the statutory Diabetes Mellitus Interagency Coordinating Committee (DMICC). Since issuance of the DRWG’s Strategic Plan, this committee has been strengthened and revitalized to serve a pivotal role in synergizing diabetes research efforts, not only within the NIH, but throughout the Department of Health and Human Services, with other relevant federal agencies, with industry, and with relevant voluntary and professional organizations. The scientific guidance provided by the DRWG’s Strategic Plan has been complemented and modulated by conferences, workshops, and other input from the external scientific community, including several notable conferences held under the auspices of the DMICC.

In response to the DRWG’s Strategic Plan, the NIH has launched many new and expanded initiatives. NIH efforts include:

- Spurring research in areas designated as high priorities and special needs by the DRWG;
- Harnessing and applying new technologies to the field of diabetes;
- Promoting the pursuit of innovative, cutting-edge research avenues;
- Fostering the immediate and full exploitation of research advances and emerging opportunities;
- Establishing a wide range of research partnerships and collaborations;
- Improving the availability and accessibility of vital research resources and tools;
- Stimulating cross-fertilization of research leads and concepts;
- Attracting and sustaining high-caliber research talent;
- Integrating and coordinating basic, pre-clinical and clinical approaches to diabetes; and
- Translating research findings into more effective treatment and prevention strategies for the benefit of patients and their families.

In preparing this progress report on diabetes program efforts, advances and opportunities since issuance of the DRWG’s 1999 Strategic Plan, the NIH has engaged in a broad consultative process with the diabetes community. At the request of the NIH, organizers of diabetes-related conferences and workshops identified important scientific advances and opportunities that have arisen since the DRWG report was published. The NIH arranged conference calls with *ad hoc* panels of experts and solicited input from the original members of the DRWG and from diabetes voluntary organizations. This report reflects input from all these sources.

Cover Photo: An islet — Islets are clusters of cells within the pancreas containing the insulin-producing beta cells critically important in diabetes.

Dr. Todd C. Brelje and Dr. Robert L. Sorenson, Islet Biology Laboratory, Department of Genetics, Cell Biology and Development, University of Minnesota