



PANCREATIC CANCER ACTION NETWORK®
ADVANCE RESEARCH. SUPPORT PATIENTS. CREATE HOPE.

March 14, 2014

Harold E. Varmus, MD
Director
National Cancer Institute
Building 31, Room 11A48
31 Center Drive
Mail Stop: 2590
Bethesda, MD 20814

Dear Dr. Varmus,

On behalf of the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, I am writing to commend the National Cancer Institute (NCI), under your leadership, for issuing the “Scientific Framework for Pancreatic Ductal Adenocarcinoma (PDAC)” on March 1, well ahead of the deadline required by the *Recalcitrant Cancer Research Act*. We believe that the recommendations in this report offer true hope for much needed progress on this devastating disease, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that they are fully implemented.

The report makes four important recommendations on expanding pancreatic cancer research: understanding the biological relationship between PDAC and diabetes mellitus; evaluating longitudinal screening protocols for biomarkers for early detection of PDAC and its precursors; studying new therapeutic strategies in immunotherapy; and developing new treatment approaches that interfere with RAS oncogene-dependent signaling pathways. As we noted in our June 27, 2013 letter to congratulate you on the release of the Horizon Scan report, the basis for the PDAC scientific framework, we believe that the research initiatives outlined in the report are important to making advances against this disease.

We are pleased that the scientific framework includes specific recommendations for next steps on each of the research initiatives, as directed by the *Recalcitrant Cancer Research Act*. It indicates there may be new funding opportunities to investigate the link between diabetes and PDAC, and it highlights the new large scale RAS program at the Frederick National Laboratory for Cancer Research (FNLCR). The report also indicates there will be a program announcement on biomarkers for early detection of PDAC, which may lead to funded grants and includes a commitment that the Cancer Immunotherapy Trials Network (CITN) will design and conduct cancer therapy trials with the most promising immunotherapy agents in PDAC.

While the report identifies the Pancreatic Cancer Action Planning Group (PCAPG) as the entity responsible for measuring progress, we were disappointed to note that there was no other discussion of appropriate benchmarks as outlined in the *Recalcitrant Cancer Research Act*. We have been a

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participant in PCAPG meetings in the past, and we look forward to the group's identification of appropriate benchmarks in the near term.

Overall, the Scientific Framework for Pancreatic Ductal Adenocarcinoma addresses questions that are critical to advancing research and improving pancreatic cancer patient outcomes. The release of this report, the identification of priority research initiatives in pancreatic cancer, and the commitment from NCI to take specific action on these initiatives are important steps forward for the entire pancreatic cancer community. We look forward to working with you and our colleagues in the pancreatic cancer community on implementing the recommendations and on developing the required benchmarks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Freshman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Freshman, JD, MBA
President & CEO

Attachment: Pancreatic Cancer Action Network March 3, 2014 Press Release

cc: The Honorable Anna Eshoo
The Honorable Leonard Lance
The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse
The Honorable Fred Upton
The Honorable Henry Waxman
The Honorable Eric Cantor
The Honorable Tom Harkin
The Honorable Lamar Alexander

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE RELEASES REPORT
OUTLINING SCIENTIFIC FRAMEWORK TO ADDRESS PANCREATIC CANCER:
A STATEMENT FROM THE PANCREATIC CANCER ACTION NETWORK**

Manhattan Beach, CA (March 3, 2014) – The Pancreatic Cancer Action Network commends the National Cancer Institute (NCI), under the leadership of Harold E. Varmus, M.D., for issuing a report that takes important steps needed to make significant advances for one of our nation’s deadliest cancers. The report is a result of the *Recalcitrant Cancer Research Act*, championed by Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) and Representatives Anna Eshoo (D-CA) and Leonard Lance (R-NJ), which was signed into law in January 2013, following a five-year push from the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network and its nationwide grassroots network.

The report was made public this past weekend by the NCI well in advance of the July 2014 deadline required by the statute. The report focuses its recommendations on pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma, which accounts for approximately 95 percent of all pancreatic cancer cases. It indicates there may be new funding opportunities that investigate the link between diabetes and pancreatic cancer, and describes a recently-announced initiative to develop drugs that target K-ras, a gene that is mutated in the vast majority of pancreatic cancer cases. The report also indicates there will be a program announcement for biomarkers for early detection of pancreatic cancer, which could lead to funded grants.

In addition, the report offers a commitment that “the Cancer Immunotherapy Trials Network (CITN), which employs the collective expertise of expert academic immunologists together with the NCI, and foundation and industrial partners, will design and conduct cancer therapy trials with the most promising immunotherapy agents” in pancreatic cancer.

“We applaud the National Cancer Institute and Dr. Varmus for their work on this crucial report, which addresses questions that are critical to advancing research and improving pancreatic cancer patient outcomes,” stated Julie Fleshman, president and CEO for the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network. “We look forward to working with the NCI and our colleagues in the pancreatic cancer community on implementing the recommendations and developing benchmarks to measure progress on achieving the recommendations and on critical issues like ensuring adequate availability of qualified researchers.”

The report identifies the Pancreatic Cancer Action Planning Group (PCAPG) as the entity that will be responsible for measuring progress. “The Pancreatic Cancer Action Network has been a participant in PCAPG meetings in the past, and we look forward to the group’s identification of appropriate benchmarks,” added Fleshman.

The Pancreatic Cancer Action Network has long advocated to ensure that there is a national strategic plan and accountability for making progress toward improving the survival rate for pancreatic cancer. “The release of this report, the identification of priority research initiatives in pancreatic cancer, and the commitment from NCI to take specific action on these initiatives is a win for the entire pancreatic cancer community,” said Fleshman.

To learn more about the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, visit www.pancan.org.

About the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network

The Pancreatic Cancer Action Network is the national organization creating hope in a comprehensive way through research, patient support, community outreach and advocacy for a cure. The organization is leading the way to change outcomes for people diagnosed with this devastating disease through a bold

initiative — *The Vision of Progress: Double the Survival for Pancreatic Cancer by 2020*. Together, we can know, fight and end pancreatic cancer by intensifying our efforts to heighten awareness, raise funds for comprehensive private research, and advocate for dedicated federal research to advance early diagnostics, better treatments and increase chances of survival.

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