

THE STATUTE HAS CREATED A PATH FOR PROGRESS IN PANCREATIC CANCER RESEARCH

The scientific framework for pancreatic cancer was built upon a report that the NCI released in June 2013 called “Pancreatic Cancer: Scanning the Horizon for Focused Interventions.” The Horizon Scan report proposed four specific initiatives for advancing pancreatic cancer research. The framework expands on these recommendations by providing specific suggestions for moving forward for each one. Over the last three years since the Framework was first released, the NCI has made important progress on the four key recommendations detailed below and has taken specific steps toward implementing them.

UNDERSTANDING THE BIOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PANCREATIC CANCER AND DIABETES

The NCI and the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), with added support from the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, sponsored a meeting in June 2013 that gave rise to a request for grant applications (RFA) to create a new research consortium. The NCI and NIDDK created the Consortium to Study Chronic Pancreatitis, Diabetes and Pancreatic Cancer (CPDPC) and in September 2015, 10 clinical centers were selected and approved for funding. The CPDPC is meeting regularly, and one of their major projects is the development of a cohort of new-onset diabetics for the purpose of validating assays for the early detection of pancreatic cancer.

EVALUATING SCREENING PROTOCOLS FOR BIOMARKERS FOR EARLY DETECTION

In June 2015, the NCI issued a Program Announcement inviting multidisciplinary teams to submit proposals aimed at establishing the Pancreatic Cancer Detection Consortium to improve early detection and characterization of precursor lesions. Applications are due between November 2015 and April 2018, and the first round of recipients have been announced. The NCI held a meeting in December 2016 to coordinate efforts between several NIH programs designed to identify biomarkers for the early detection of pancreatic cancer.

STUDYING NEW STRATEGIES IN IMMUNOTHERAPY

In December 2016, the NCI released a Request for Applications to support a consortium of up to five institutions to work collaboratively to advance this field and conduct clinical and pre-clinical research to identify new immunotherapies for the treatment of pancreatic cancer.

DEVELOPING NEW TREATMENT APPROACHES THAT INTERFERE WITH RAS ONCOGENE-DEPENDENT SIGNALING PATHWAYS

In 2013, the NCI launched the RAS Initiative with significant funding attached. The project has the potential to increase the survival rate for pancreatic cancer as well as for other forms of cancer that are driven by RAS. The initiative has boosted scientific momentum and collaboration. Since 2015, the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network has partnered with the NCI Frederick National Laboratory for Cancer Research, the hub of the RAS Initiative, to award fellowships to outstanding young scientists who are studying KRAS in pancreatic cancer. As part of this unique public-private partnership, our grantees travel to Frederick to conduct novel KRAS research, gaining unparalleled mentorship from experts and training on cutting-edge technologies.

WHAT WE ARE ASKING FROM CONGRESS

The Recalcitrant Cancer Research Act and the NCI’s scientific framework on pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma are important milestones toward improving survival rates. While the NCI continues its work to fully implement the original recommendations of the first scientific framework, there is significant urgency to build on this foundation to further accelerate progress and reach our goal to improve patient outcomes and double pancreatic cancer survival. We therefore call on Congress to ensure that the NCI and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have the necessary resources to aid in the discovery of better treatments and early detection tools that will improve pancreatic cancer survival. Further, we recognize that the five-year update to the framework required by the statute is due in 2019 and therefore call on the NCI to begin those discussions as soon as possible.

THE PANCREATIC CANCER ACTION NETWORK CALLS ON THE 115TH CONGRESS AND THE ADMINISTRATION TO WAGE HOPE BY:

- Supporting \$36.2 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in FY2018, including \$6 billion for the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the funding provided from the 21st Century Cures Act.
- Continuing to include pancreatic cancer in the Department of Defense’s Peer Reviewed Cancer Research Program (PRCRP) and providing a funding increase for the program above the FY2017 level.
- Supporting a strong federal commitment to those suffering from the deadliest cancers — defined by the Recalcitrant Cancer Research Act of 2012 as cancers with five-year survival rates below 50 percent — by joining the Congressional Caucus on the Deadliest Cancers, and by ensuring that there are no lapses or reductions in health coverage for this critical population.
- Continuing to monitor the implementation of the Recalcitrant Cancer Research Act — legislation that is opening new avenues of NCI-supported research for pancreatic cancer.