



The National Center on  
Addiction and Substance Abuse  
at Columbia University

N. R. AUGUSTINE  
NOV 02 2009

October 28, 2009

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Norman Augustine, MS  
Chair  
Scientific Management Review Board, OD, NIH  
Building 1, Room 103  
9000 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Mr. Augustine:

I am writing to you and the Scientific Management Review Board to provide my strong support for merging the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Merging and integrating these two organizations will help the National Institutes of Health better focus on all addictive substances including alcohol, tobacco, controlled prescription drugs, illicit drugs and other drugs of abuse.

I have been a strong proponent of a combined institute for many years. In my 1986 book, *America's Health Care Revolution*, I argued that creating one institute for all addictions would "help generate a steady stream of money for research, make clear our national commitment, and attract more of our best minds to the effort." Since then, I have called repeatedly for the creation of such an institute through newspaper opinion pieces and in my book *Radical Surgery* in 1994, arguing further that a combined institute would eliminate many of the bureaucratic bouts over turf that slow and sometimes kill valuable research projects.

Merging the institutes is an idea long overdue and one that only has been bolstered by the growth of scientific knowledge. Science clearly demonstrates that the disease to be addressed is addiction--that alcoholism or dependence on tobacco, cocaine or other drugs are all manifestations of that condition. In the real world, few people use only one substance. The pathways to addiction frequently involve multiple substances and, among dependent users, there is significant substitution of drugs of abuse.

CASA's 17 years of research on substance abuse and addiction has found that examining only one substance or class of drugs can have a blinding effect. For example, while America was congratulating itself on reductions in marijuana and other illicit drug use, abuse of controlled prescription drugs skyrocketed, catching policy makers, prevention services providers and the treatment community off guard. Creating one national institute focusing on all substances of abuse will free researchers to examine the pathways to addiction, prevention strategies, pharmacological and behavioral treatment



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and their efficacy, and appropriate policy responses across drugs of abuse. A broader research focus on substance abuse and addiction instead of on specific substances of abuse might also prove to be a more cost-effective way to understand the disease. Above all, the National Institutes of Health should be driven by the science and most effective ways to serve our nation and all its citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Joseph A. Califano, Jr.", is written over the typed name. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J' and 'C'.

Joseph A. Califano, Jr.

Cc: Nora D. Volkow, MD

Kenneth R. Warren, PhD