



December 6, 2010

Mr. Norman Augustine  
Chair, Scientific Management Review Board  
Office of Science Policy  
Office of the Director  
National Institutes of Health  
6705 Rockledge Drive, Suite 750  
Bethesda, MD 20892  
[smrb@mail.nih.gov](mailto:smrb@mail.nih.gov)

Dear Chairman Augustine and Members of the NIH Scientific Management Review Board:

As the nation's sole representative for veterinary medical colleges, departments of comparative medicine, and departments of veterinary science, the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) writes this letter to express its great interest in the deliberations of and upcoming recommendations from the Scientific Management Review Board (SMRB) with regard to measures by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to advance translational medicine and therapeutics.

We fully recognize the importance of this new initiative and welcome the potential benefits a new institute with an invigorated focus on translational medicine and therapeutics will have on the nation's health. We applaud the emphasis that NIH has given to the importance of transdisciplinary involvement and collaboration in translational research, and investigators at our member institutions are proud to have made significant contributions to achieving the goals of translational research and comparative medicine in advancing best science toward improving human health. We greatly appreciate, therefore, the stated position of the SMRB not to disrupt extant programs that could and should aid in the advancement of this new initiative.

Pursuant to the latter, we believe it is critical that the value of the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR) and all of its multiple components to this initiative be fully recognized and not underestimated. The NCRR serves as a foundation for the entire NIH research enterprise. NCRR's matrix of extramural programs enable discovery across the entire continuum of research from basic science to community health care. More than 30,000 NIH-funded investigators nationwide rely on the resources, tools, and networks made possible through NCRR support.

In particular, we wish to highlight the critical roles of the Divisions of Comparative Medicine, Research Infrastructure, and Biomedical Technology to advancing translational medicine. The programs and resources that depend on the success of these divisions, especially Comparative Medicine, are vital to discovering new knowledge and achieving substantive and significant new advances in translational medicine and therapeutics.

It is also imperative to point out that many of these programs and resources critical to the advancement of translational medicine and therapeutics are developed, conducted, and advanced within the nation's colleges of veterinary medicine, departments of comparative medicine, and departments of veterinary science, in addition to institutions of other health professions. Comparative medicine veterinary scientists at AAVMC institutions are uniquely positioned to understand and explore the interspecies comparisons that are an essential element of translational research. They are an indispensable component of the scientific workforce as both independent and collaborative investigators, with the knowledge and training required to add value to and avoid misinterpretation of experimental findings in animal model systems. The contributions of veterinary medical scientists in translational research and the need to sustain and expand this workforce are highlighted in two recent National Research Council publications: *National Need and Priorities for Veterinarians in Biomedical Research* (National Academy Press, 2004) and *Critical Needs for Research in Veterinary Science* (National Academy Press, 2005).

We applaud the NIH for prioritizing translational research in its assessment and evaluation of NIH resources and the recognition of the high value of NCRP programs in advancing progress in translational medicine and therapeutics. We are aware of the proposal by the Translational Medicine and Therapeutics (TMAT) Working Group to the SMRB, to create a new NIH categorical institute of Translational Medicine and Therapeutics, which includes a recommendation to move the Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) program from the NCRP and to this new institute. From the public information available on the TMAT recommendations, we recognize that the SMRB and TMAT may benefit from a better understanding of the role and functions of critical programs and the necessity to maintain and enhance them as NIH seeks to determine the optimal redistribution and reorganization of NCRP programs. A few examples of essential programs include NCRP grants to academic veterinary medical institutions to train veterinarians to meet national biomedical research needs, to construct and renovate research facilities, and to create and maintain research resource centers that are utilized by grantees from all of NIH's categorical institutes.

**We, the AAVMC member institutions, therefore recommend that the SMRB:**

- 1. Take additional time to consider the foregoing so as to make a more comprehensive recommendation to the NIH leadership.**
- 2. Develop a stakeholders' group to advise the NIH leadership on the reorganization plan for the future of NCRP programs. The advisory group should include representatives of the colleges of veterinary medicine, departments of the comparative medicine, and departments of veterinary science.**

The AAVMC would be pleased to assist in recommending individuals for an advisory group. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (202) 371-9195, ext 115, or [mpappa@aavmc.org](mailto:mpappa@aavmc.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Marguerite Pappaioanou". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marguerite Pappaioanou, DVM, MPVM, PhD, Dip ACVPM  
Executive Director  
Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges

The Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC) is a non-profit membership organization working to protect and improve the health and welfare of animals, people and the environment by advancing academic veterinary medicine. Its members include all 33 veterinary medical colleges in the United States and Canada, nine departments of veterinary science, eight departments of comparative medicine, three veterinary medical education institutions, nine international colleges of veterinary medicine, and five affiliate international colleges of veterinary medicine. On the Web: <http://www.aavmc.org>