



UNIVERSIDAD DE PUERTO RICO, RECINTO DE CIENCIAS MÉDICAS
UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO, MEDICAL SCIENCES CAMPUS

Programa RCMI
RCMI Program

December 1, 2010

Scientific Management Review Board, OD, NIH
ATTN: Lyric Jorgenson
Office of Science Policy, Office of the Director
6705 Rockledge Drive, Suite 750
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Scientific Management Review Board:

This communication responds to the request for written comments on the recommendations from the Translational Medicine and Therapeutics (TMAT) working group, as published in the Federal Register's announcement for the December 7th Meeting of the Scientific Management Review Board.

Although encouraged by the hard work of the (TMAT) working group to expand and augment NIH's efforts in developing new therapeutics and enhancing clinical research infrastructure, as directors of the Research Centers in Minority Institutions (RCMI) Program at the University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus, we are extremely concerned about the potential negative impact of the proposed reorganization on the non-clinical research programs at NCRR. Our concern is reinforced by the fact that the evaluation of such impact was outside the mandate of the TMAT working group.

As an example, the RCMI Program has been committed to the development of a robust biomedical research infrastructure at minority institutions for over twenty-five years, diversifying the national capability for research in the health sciences. In addition to offering direct support for research infrastructure at these institutions, the RCMI Program has developed other mechanisms such as the Translational Research Network, RTRN, and the Infrastructure for Clinical and Translational Research, RCTR, to address the full spectrum of translational research, and is continually pursuing new and innovative ways to enhance opportunities for faculty at RCMI grantee institutions to partner and collaborate with investigators supported by other NCRR and NIH components, and other PHS agencies. How these efforts will be protected or continued after the proposed NCRR reorganization is unknown.

The uncertainties emerging from the proposed reorganization lead us to conclude that the creation of a new center for translational medicine requires a careful evaluation of the long-term effects on all NCRR-supported programs. This evaluation should be performed in close consultation with relevant stakeholders to ensure minimal negative impact on important programs and protection of current research alliances and partnerships. Such evaluation should also consider keeping together those programs with similar missions and targeted communities. In summary, more time for reflective and inclusive discussions is necessary to arrive at decisions that will be well received and assure long-term success for all involved.

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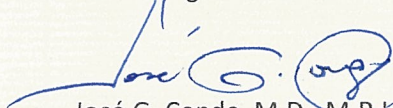
We respectfully request that our concerns be taken into consideration during deliberations next week on the recommendation of the TMAT working group.

Sincerely,



Emma Fernández-Repollet, Ph.D.

RCMI Program Director



José G. Conde, M.D., M.P.H.

RCMI Associate Program Director

c Francis Collins, MD, PhD, NIH Director

Norman Augustine, BSE, MSE, NIH SMRB Chair