



December 4, 2010

Attn. Lyric Jorgensen
Office of Science Policy
Office of the Director
National Institutes of Health
6705 Rockledge Drive, Suite 750
Bethesda, MD 20892 (Courier zip code: 20817)

Dear Members of the NIH Scientific Management Review Board:

The RCMI Program Directors' Association submitted a letter on December 3, 2010 commenting on the translational medicine and therapeutics working group proposal to create a translational medicine institute. In that letter we stated the fast tracking of proposed changes that could inadvertently lead to the creation of an even greater silo. While the details are not fully described, one recent consideration, which has garnered much media attention is the possible relocation of the National Primate Research Centers to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. However, such a relocation could easily give the impression to the general research community that the NIH has now refocused primate research for infectious diseases and that other research areas, such as cancer, cardiometabolic disorders, and neurological diseases, are not of primary interest. It could set a tone that only nonhuman primate-related infectious disease research is likely to be funded and this would have a dramatic adverse effect on the translation of health science advances.

Again, while we applaud the direction and overall goal of the translational medicine and therapeutics working group, the fast tracking of the apparent proposed changes could have many more untoward adverse effects than are presently being considered. As such, we strongly believe there should be a much longer time period to incorporate broad community input. This seems to be essential to ensure such dramatic modifications of the organization and conduct of health science at the level of the NIH can transcend any politically driven expediency, and truly achieves a shared goal of improving patient outcomes. The fundamental goal should be improving the health of the nation, and this should not be compromised by artificially created and/or unrealistically imposed processes and timelines.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment once again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith C. Norris M.D." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Keith C. Norris M.D., F.A.C.P.
President, RCMI Program Directors' Association

Cc: Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D.
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