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Members of Scientific Management Review Board  
NIH

Dear Members of the Scientific Management Review Board:

As part of the deliberations regarding the creation of a center for advancing translational medicine and therapeutics development and the fate of the National Center for Research Resources, it is extremely important to consider how to best continue support of the very productive and diverse Animal Resource and Biologic Material Centers that are funded by the NCRR and administered through the NCRR's Division of Comparative Medicine. These approximately 50 centers include the internationally acclaimed National Primate Centers and Mutant Mouse Regional Resource Centers as well as individual highly specialized animal resources such as the National Gnotobiotic Rodent Resource Center (P40 RR018603) that I direct. These centers provide specialized animals and biologic materials such as antibodies that require very sophisticated technical expertise and are very labor intensive. Therefore, they are beyond the technical and financial capabilities of individual NIH supported investigators. However, these resources are essential for mechanistically oriented research in animal models that help develop new therapeutic agents to treat human diseases. These animal resources are used by investigators around the world. For example, in the 2009-10 funding cycle our relatively small National Gnotobiotic Rodent Resource Center with annual direct costs of \$360,899 has supplied germ-free (sterile) and selectively colonized mice and rats to 43 individual principal investigators in 20 universities and the NIAID intramural program and trained personnel from 3 universities and the NIAID intramural program in gnotobiotic techniques so they could start their own small germ-free mouse colonies with our continued support and direction. In the initial 4 years of funding of our center, we provided gnotobiotic rodents to 61 investigators in 35 institutions and our user base has progressively grown. In that time frame, 39 currently funded and 11 pending grants depend on our National Gnotobiotic Rodent Resource Center as a source of gnotobiotic animals to complete these aims. The Zebrafish International Resource Center distributes 110,000 fish to 700 scientific users each year. The animal-oriented Comparative Medicine Division within NCRR understands the needs of both the producers and users of these important resources and has done an excellent job of expanding and optimizing

these resources in a cost effective manner. Leadership of the Comparative Medicine Division have a veterinary background and can easily communicate with the principal investigator and staff of each funded facility. This background is quite different from the typical biologic science background of most NIH grants administrators. The NCCR program managers have a very hands on approach and are valuable allies in developing optimal animal resources for the broad group of NIH funded investigators while conserving expenses and maximizing efficiencies. The annual meeting of the principal investigators of the animal resource units funded by the NCCR and the Division of Comparative Medicine staff has been a very productive way of sharing experiences and communicating new ways of developing animal models of human disease in a very cost effective manner.

I strongly encourage continuing this important division, regardless of what institutional structure is decided upon. It is essential to have an experienced NIH grants administrative team that can effectively communicate with principal investigators to optimize resources while conserving costs. The entire community of investigators supported by the NIH profits immensely by the small investment in centralized animal resources that are very effectively administered by the NCCR Comparative Medicine Division staff.

Sincerely,



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