

Medical Research Funding Issue Brief

Issue

The economic impact of cardiovascular disease on the U.S. health care system continues to grow as the population ages. With more than 70 million Americans living with some form of heart disease, the cost of health care services, medications and lost productivity is in the billions. Thankfully, federal research has provided breakthrough advances in understanding the disease that have resulted in better diagnosis and treatment, lower costs and a decrease in the number of deaths attributed to it.

Moving forward, however, federal funding for this valuable research is in jeopardy. The Bush Administration's proposed budget for fiscal year 2007 failed to include increased funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and cut funding for many critical health programs. If instituted, the proposed budget would force the research community to scale back and even halt valuable initiatives. While the Senate approved an amendment to its budget resolution that provides an extra \$7 billion for key health and education programs, a similar amendment in the House was defeated in committee and it is unclear whether it will be offered up again for a full House vote.

ACC Activity

The American College of Cardiology (ACC) believes that the federal government must expand its commitment to medical research and to public education and prevention of cardiovascular disease. Continued support for the NHLBI in addition to NIH as a whole is vital, as is the federal government's commitment to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) State Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ).

Each year, the ACC participates in the appropriations process by providing a statement to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees in support of increased funding for the cardiovascular research and public education programs. The ACC participates in the Washington, D.C.-based Coalition for Healthcare Funding and the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research Funding, both of which are dedicated to strong federal investment in health care research. In addition, the ACC belongs to the National Coalition for Heart and Stroke Research and the Ad Hoc Coalition to Save Lives through Public Access Defibrillation.

The ACC Supports the Following FY 2007 Funding Levels:

- \$29.849 billion in NIH funding
- \$3.068 billion for the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute
- \$440 million for the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
- \$55 million for the CDC State Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program
- \$9 million for the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Rural and Community Access to Emergency Defibrillation Program

Why Medical Research and Public Health Education Program Funding is Important to Cardiovascular Specialists

According to recent testimony by NIH Director Elias Zerhouni, the ground-breaking research on the causes and treatment of heart disease, supported in large part by NIH, is largely responsible for the decline in cardiovascular disease. Without recent developments such as drug coated stents, safe levels of blood pressure and cholesterol lowering therapies, heart attacks would still account for 1.2 to 1.3 million deaths per year instead of the actual 515, 000 deaths experienced today.

Increased funding for medical research over the years has allowed researchers to develop better diagnostic tools and surgical techniques and to study new methods of treatment, such as gene therapy, for cardiac patients. Medical research has played a major role in a notable decline in the number of deaths from cardiovascular disease over the past three decades. Despite this, cardiovascular disease is still the leading cause of death for men and women, proving that further research and increased public education on cardiovascular disease are needed.

[Click here](#) to view the ACC's statement for the record of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services regarding fiscal year 2007 funding for cardiovascular research and public health education.