



American Alliance of Cancer Pain Initiatives

June 10, 2002

TO: The Panel on Scientific Boundaries for Review and NIH Staff

FROM: The Board of Directors of the American Alliance of Cancer Pain Initiatives

We would like to express our concern with the proposed study sections for the Oncological Sciences Integrated Review Group (IRG). None of the thirteen proposed study sections is designated to review grant applications that deal with pain management and palliative care. This is of particular concern, especially in light of recommendations from the National Cancer Policy Board that the federal government "should be playing a more powerful role than it does currently" in breaking down or lowering "the barriers to excellent palliative care for people with cancer, and those who will develop cancer in years to come." (*Improving Palliative Care for Cancer*, IOM, National Research Council report, 2001). We urge you to consider the National Cancer Policy Board's recommendations and create a study section specifically for pain management and palliative care research.

Pain is one of the most common and feared symptoms of cancer. A third of persons have pain when their cancer is diagnosed, more than two-thirds of those with advanced disease have pain. Numerous studies carried out over the last dozen years have shown that the pain of cancer is often undertreated. A report in 2001 showed that half of persons who were dying had moderate to severe pain. Unrelieved pain has devastating physiological and psychological consequences that result in dramatic decreases in quality of life and functional status. Both basic and applied research is needed to assure that cancer pain is appropriately managed.

The AACPI is the national organization of State Cancer Pain Initiatives, grass-roots interdisciplinary organizations of healthcare professionals, patient advocates and educators dedicated to removing the barriers that are responsible for our nation's failure to provide appropriate pain control to persons with cancer. Many AACPI participants are themselves engaged in research; all base their interventional efforts on sound research findings. Improving the quality of life for cancer patients with pain depends upon application of state-of-the-art pain management therapies, on understanding the most effective ways to change clinical practice, and on how to best communicate with patients and families. Unfortunately, there has historically been very little federal funding for research to improve pain and palliative care as compared to funding for cancer treatment.

The reorganization of study sections is an opportunity to address this shortcoming and provide support for this critical area of health care research. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The American Alliance of Cancer Pain Initiatives Board of Directors:

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Katie M. Bond, RN, MPA, OCN
Arizona Cancer Pain Initiative

Ashby C. Watson, RN, MS, CS,
Virginia Cancer Pain Initiative

cc. Andrew von Eschenbach, MD
Director, National Cancer Institute