



## AICR's Federal Priorities: Cancer Research Funding

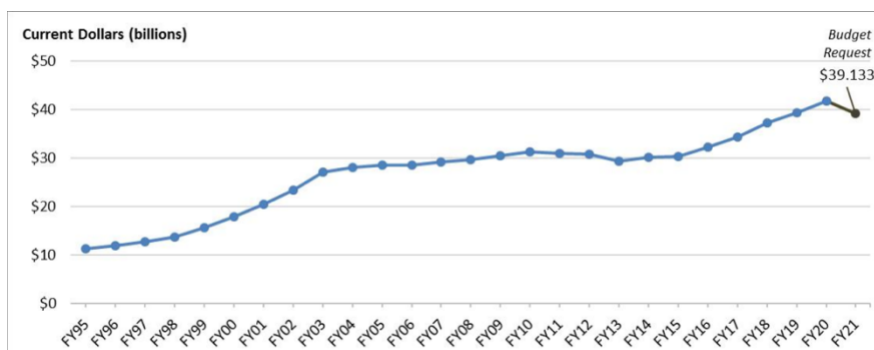
### Background

As one of the largest funders in the field of lifestyle and cancer, the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) has dedicated more than \$109 million to exploring the link between diet, obesity, physical activity and cancer prevention and survivorship. While the research we fund is the backbone of our organization, we also recognize the pivotal role that public research institutions play in our understanding of cancer. It is important that robust cancer research funding be made available so that progress continues and young investigators are incentivized to enter the field.

### Federal Funding

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the largest single funder of biomedical research in the world, and serves as a catalyst for scientific breakthroughs that have improved health and quality of life for millions of Americans.<sup>1</sup> In FY 2020, NIH invested nearly \$41.5 billion in biomedical research, with more than \$6.5 billion going to the National Cancer Institute.<sup>2-3</sup> The NIH has seen a \$9 billion increase to its budget over the past four years, leading to major advances in public health and healthcare.<sup>4</sup> People are living longer and chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer are less deadly.<sup>5</sup>

#### NIH Funding, 1995-present



Source: Congressional Research Service

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) is the largest of the 27 entities that make up the NIH and is the largest funder of cancer research in the world.<sup>6</sup> Due to continued investment in cancer research, the rate of new cancer cases has declined 29 percent from 1991 to 2017. This includes a 2.2 percent decrease from 2016 to 2017, the largest single-year decline in history.<sup>7</sup>

Cancer death rates are also dropping: in 2017, the rate had dropped to 152 per 100,000 cases for all sites.<sup>8</sup> Despite these promising benchmarks, cancer remains the second leading cause of death in the United States, showing how much work remains in the field of cancer research.<sup>9</sup> These figures underline the importance of having a dynamic funding structure in place for NIH and NCI that not only maintains a crucial threshold of funding every year, but increases that funding in order to sustain and propel innovations in cancer research.

In addition to the innovations mentioned above, increased investment in the NIH also serves the purpose of incentivizing young researchers into the field of biomedical research. In 2018, NCI Director Norman Sharpless announced that the NCI would be increasing the total number of grants given to early-stage investigators by 25 percent, an increase that was only possible due to continued increases in NIH appropriations over the past three years.<sup>10</sup> This funding was meant to offset a steep decline over the past decade in awards given to early-career investigators.<sup>11</sup> While this is a promising step in the right direction, continued funding is needed to ensure that these programs can be maintained. Early-career investigators are the future of biomedical research in the United States, and investing in them is the only way to ensure continued progress in medical innovations.

### Policy Recommendations and Approach

In order to continue moving cancer research forward and fund research focused on the prevention of cancer, AICR has partnered with other cancer and health-focused organizations to advocate for an increase in funding for the NIH and NCI. [One Voice Against Cancer](#) is a coalition of more than 40 national

organizations that have joined together with the common purpose of securing more federal funding for cancer research. AICR has been an active member of OVAC since December 2019, lending our voice and unique perspective on cancer prevention to this cause. AICR is also part of the [Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research](#), a coalition of more than 330 organizations that advocates for maintaining and increasing biomedical research funding. As part of both coalitions, we have been able to provide a more powerful voice on the need for cancer research funding.



Source: One Voice Against Cancer

For FY 2020, AICR advocated for a \$2.5 billion increase in overall appropriations for NIH with a proportional increase for NCI. At the end of 2019, Congress passed an appropriations bill increasing NIH funding by \$2.6 billion, with a \$296 million increase for NCI. AICR is committed to securing another funding increase for NIH and NCI for FY 2021. On March 10, 2020, OVAC sent [a letter](#) to lawmakers recommending a \$3 billion increase in funding for NIH, bringing the total funding to at least \$44.7 billion. For NCI, the recommended funding is at least \$6.9 billion. The letter also called on Congress to provide \$559 million to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Cancer Prevention and Control, which provides states with much-needed resources to prevent cancer. AICR is proud to support these asks and will continue to advocate for increases at this level throughout the year.

## Conclusion

Innovations in how we diagnose, treat, prevent and survive cancer can be traced to research funded by the NIH and NCI.<sup>12</sup> Continued investment in this research is an investment in innovation, in the health of all Americans and in the economy. As a non-profit dedicated to funding the most cutting-edge research on cancer prevention and survivorship, we know that the best way to continue the positive trends are to increase federal funding to both NIH and NCI. To learn more about AICR's commitment to protecting and strengthening federal funding for cancer research, visit our website <https://www.aicr.org/impact/policy-advocacy> or email [k.kiefer@aicr.org](mailto:k.kiefer@aicr.org).

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<sup>1</sup> National Institutes of Health. "Impact of NIH research." n.d. Available at <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/what-we-do/impact-nih-research>

<sup>2</sup> National Institutes of Health. "Budget." March 3, 2020. Available at <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/what-we-do/budget>

<sup>3</sup> National Institutes of Health. "Estimates of funding for various research, condition and disease categories." February 24, 2020. Available at [https://report.nih.gov/categorical\\_spending.aspx](https://report.nih.gov/categorical_spending.aspx)

<sup>4</sup> Congressional Research Service. "National Institutes of Health Funding: FY1994-FY2020." Updated January 22, 2020. Available at <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43341.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> National Institutes of Health. "Impact of NIH research." Updated February 21, 2020. Available at <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/what-we-do/impact-nih-research/our-health>

<sup>6</sup> National Cancer Institute. "National Cancer Institute overview and mission." Updated April 6, 2018. Available at <https://www.cancer.gov/about-nci/overview>

<sup>7</sup> American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts and Figures 2020. January 2020. Available at <https://www.cancer.org/research/cancer-facts-statistics/all-cancer-facts-figures/cancer-facts-figures-2020.html>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> World Health Organization. "Cancer fact sheet." September 2018. Available at <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cancer>

<sup>10</sup> The Cancer Letter. "Sharpless adds \$100 million to NCI's RPG pool, R01s for young investigators boosted by 25%." April 20, 2018. Available at [https://cancerletter.com/articles/20180420\\_1/](https://cancerletter.com/articles/20180420_1/)

<sup>11</sup> The NIH Director. "New NIH approach to grant funding aimed at optimizing stewardship of taxpayer dollars." May 2, 2017. Available at <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/who-we-are/nih-director/statements/new-nih-approach-grant-funding-aimed-optimizing-stewardship-taxpayer-dollars>

<sup>12</sup> National Institutes of Health. "Impact of NIH research." Updated February 21, 2020. Available at <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/what-we-do/impact-nih-research/our-health>