



A PATIENT-CENTERED FORUM OF NATIONAL ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS ADDRESSING PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES IN CANCER

June 21, 2000

HAND-DELIVERED

The Honorable Dan Burton
Chairman, Committee on Government Reform
Attn: Lisa Arafune, Clerk
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Comments for The Record: “Cancer Care for the New Millennium – Integrative Oncology” Hearing June 7-8, 2000

Dear Chairman Burton:

On behalf of the undersigned cancer patient advocacy and research organizations, we are pleased that the Committee is exploring how complementary and alternative therapies in the context of cancer treatment in the new millennium. As a community, we are ever hopeful for news about substances that could reduce the impact and burden of cancer.

Over the past 20 years, treatments once thought to be radical have now become standard therapies with the result that some diseases now have unprecedented cure rates. The remarkable 80 percent cure rate of children with childhood leukemia — a nearly fatal disease 25 years ago — is the most outstanding example of this progress. This advance was made possible largely through a coordinated national clinical trials program wherein most children with cancer receive their treatment.

Recent rapid developments in molecular biology are yielding new and exciting insights about how certain natural compounds affect cancer cells, and there is every reason to believe that such compounds will become effective treatments for many types of cancer. Rigorous scientific review of how these substances affect cancer cells and of their safety and efficacy through high quality clinical trials will hopefully result in therapies with maximal therapeutic impact and minimal side effects. We want the same type of scrutiny applied to all potentially new treatments for cancer, whether they originated as alternative, complementary, or mainstream therapies.

The determination of safety and efficacy responsible for successes in cancer treatment appropriately rely on standard scientific methods by which any treatment — and hopefully alternative and complementary therapies — is evaluated. High quality clinical trials go through strict scientific review under the auspices of institutions such as the National Cancer Institute and the Food and Drug Administration. As cancer patients and advocates, we rely on their judgment to evaluate and recommend reliable and potent therapies to treat cancer.

We are counting on your leadership to help assure that anticancer treatments can be expedited through the processes that best guarantee optimal safety and efficacy of all new therapies. It is the hope of all who have been touched by cancer.

Sincerely,

Cancer Leadership Council

American Society of Clinical Oncology
Cancer Care, Inc.
Cancer Research Foundation of America
The Children's Cause, Inc.
Colorectal Cancer Network
Cure For Lymphoma Foundation
Kidney Cancer Association
The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
National Prostate Cancer Coalition
North American Brain Tumor Coalition
Oncology Nursing Society
Ovarian Cancer National Alliance
US-TOO International, Inc.
Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization