

The National Cancer Institute

Key Points

- The NCI is part of the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Health and Human Services.
- NCI was established by Congress in 1937.
- NCI's main responsibilities include coordinating the National Cancer Program; conducting and supporting cancer research; training physicians and scientists; and disseminating information about cancer detection, diagnosis, treatment, prevention, control, palliative care, and survivorship.
- Most of NCI's budget is used to fund grants and contracts to universities, medical schools, cancer centers, research laboratories, and private firms in the United States and about 60 other countries around the world.

1. What is the National Cancer Institute (NCI)?

NCI is one of 27 Institutes and Centers that form the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which is part of the Department of Health and Human Services. NCI was established by Congress in the National Cancer Institute Act of 1937 and is located on the NIH campus at 9000 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20892, with satellite offices in Rockville and Frederick, MD.

2. What are NCI's main responsibilities and activities?

NCI's initial responsibilities, as defined in the National Cancer Institute Act, included the following:

- Conducting and fostering cancer research
- Reviewing and approving grant-in-aid applications to support promising research projects on the causes, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of cancer
- Collecting, analyzing, and disseminating the results of cancer research conducted in the United States and in other countries
- Providing training and instruction in cancer diagnosis and treatment

NCI's responsibilities were later expanded and strengthened in the National Cancer Act of 1971. In this legislation, Congress created the National Cancer Program and charged NCI with its coordination.

The National Cancer Act of 1971 also expanded the scope of NCI's international activities to include support of cancer research outside the United States by highly qualified foreign nationals, collaborative research involving U.S. and foreign participants, and training of U.S. scientists abroad and foreign scientists in the United States.

Additional legislation (the current Public Health Service Act) expanded NCI's dissemination activities to include providing information and education programs for patients and the public to help individuals take steps to do the following:

- Reduce their risk of cancer
- Make them aware of early detection techniques and motivate the appropriate utilization of these techniques
- Help individuals deal with cancer if it strikes
- Provide information to improve long-term survival



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The Public Health Service Act also charged NCI with continuing and expanding programs to provide physicians and the public with state-of-the-art information about the treatment of individual types of cancer and to identify clinical trials that might benefit patients while advancing knowledge of cancer treatment.

3. How has NCI fulfilled its responsibilities?

NCI has built a national network of regional and community cancer centers, physicians who are cancer specialists, cooperative groups of clinical researchers, and volunteer and community outreach groups.

In addition, it has developed an infrastructure for discovery that consists of support mechanisms, organizations, and networks that link scientists, facilities, resources, and information. This infrastructure provides the foundation for basic, translational, and clinical research activities encompassing all aspects of cancer, including the following:

- Biology
- Physiology
- Genetics
- Epidemiology
- Prevention
- Screening and detection
- Diagnosis
- Treatment
- Palliative care
- Survivorship

NCI's infrastructure also supports training programs to ensure the continuous development of highly skilled researchers in basic, clinical, cancer control, behavioral, and population sciences.

Each year, the efforts of thousands of researchers supported by this infrastructure produce scientific advances in all areas of cancer research. Furthermore, NCI has initiated cancer control programs to hasten the application of knowledge gained through research.

4. What is NCI's annual budget?

In Fiscal Year 2010, the NCI budget was \$5.1* billion, most of which was used to fund grants and contracts to universities, medical schools, cancer centers, research laboratories, and private companies in the United States and about 60 other countries around the world. The balance of the funds supported research activities conducted at NCI.

**Budget number rounded to one decimal place.*

5. Are we making progress against cancer?

Because of the work of NCI scientists and cancer researchers throughout the United States and the rest of the world, real progress is being made against cancer. In the United States, the rate of new cancer cases overall has been declining since 1999, and the rate of cancer deaths overall has been decreasing for more than a decade. These trends reflect improvements in cancer treatment and advances in technology that have led to better tools for understanding, detecting, and diagnosing cancer. People with cancer are living longer and have a better quality of life than ever before. In 2007, there were more than 11 million cancer survivors in the United States.

Related Resources

- Cancer.gov en español, NCI's Spanish-language website (<http://www.cancer.gov/espanol>)
- Fact Sheets: About NCI (<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/NCI>)
- *NCI Annual Fact Book*, a collection of annual reports about how NCI has distributed its budget among various research programs and funding mechanisms (<http://obf.cancer.gov/financial/factbook.htm>)
- NCI Center for Global Health (<http://www.cancer.gov/aboutnci/globalhealth>)

How can we help?

We offer comprehensive research-based information for patients and their families, health professionals, cancer researchers, advocates, and the public.

- **Call** NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)
- **Visit** us at <http://www.cancer.gov> or <http://www.cancer.gov/espanol>
- **Chat** using LiveHelp, NCI's instant messaging service, at <http://www.cancer.gov/livehelp>
- **E-mail** us at cancergovstaff@mail.nih.gov
- **Order** publications at <http://www.cancer.gov/publications> or by calling 1-800-4-CANCER
- **Get help** with quitting smoking at 1-877-44U-QUIT (1-877-448-7848)