

## Congressionally-Established Diabetes Research Working Group

In response to FY 1998 appropriations report language for NIH and the NIDDK appropriations, the NIH established a Diabetes Research Working Group on December 1, 1997. House Report 105-205 and Senate Report 105-58 urged the NIH and NIDDK to establish the Working Group to develop a comprehensive plan for NIH-funded diabetes research--a plan that would recommend future diabetes research initiatives and directions. House appropriation report language for FY 1999 specifically asked the Working Group to include overall budget estimates to accomplish its recommendations in the final plan (House Report 105-635). The Working Group, which is advisory to the Congress, is charged with submitting its Research Plan directly to the Congress. The NIH Director appointed a non-government chairperson for the Working Group, C. Ronald Kahn, M.D., Mary K. Iacocca Professor of Medicine and Director, Joslin Diabetes Center, Harvard. Other members of the Group include leading diabetes researchers external to the NIH, industry representatives, and leaders of organizations that represent people with diabetes.

During its year-long deliberations, the Working Group analyzed the existing NIH research portfolio; heard public commentary; and consulted with numerous scientific advisors having expertise in diabetes. It held plenary sessions and subgroup meetings. The culmination of this process is a comprehensive, science-based document entitled: "Conquering Diabetes: A Strategic Plan for the 21st Century." This Research Plan reviews the magnitude of the health and economic burden of diabetes, as well as research advances and challenges in this field. The Research Plan recommends initiatives in three broad categories: "Extraordinary Opportunities" in diabetes research, as well as "Special Needs for Special Problems," and "Resource and Infrastructural Needs." As directed in House appropriations report language for FY 1999, the Research Plan also includes budget estimates of the funds that are needed to implement the proposed research initiatives.

On February 25, 1999, the Diabetes Research Working Group officially released the "Summary and Recommendations of the DRWG report to Congress: Conquering Diabetes, A Strategic Plan for the 21st Century," at a congressional press briefing. This briefing arranged by the co-chairs of the bipartisan Congressional Diabetes Caucus, Representative, George Nethercutt (R-WA) and Ms. Diana DeGette (D-CO) with the support of the American Diabetes Association and the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation International. Scientific presentations at the briefing were made by Chairman, C. Ronald Kahn, M.D., and by four members of the DRWG: Dr. Nancy Cox (Genetics of Diabetes), Dr. Christopher Newgard (Autoimmunity and the Beta Cell), Dr. James R. Gavin, III (Eye, Kidney, and Nerve Complications and Impact of Diabetes in Minority Populations), and Dr. Willa Ann Hsueh, (Cardiovascular Complications and Importance of Clinical Research and Clinical Trials). Ms. Pam Fernandes, a patient with diabetes, described the impact of the disease from a patient's perspective.

**Note: It should be emphasized that the DRWG Strategic Research Plan for diabetes research funded by the National Institutes of Health has been developed by an independent, congressionally-established Diabetes Research Working Group, with input from diabetes investigators, diabetes patients, and other members of the broad diabetes research community. The Working Group is composed of scientific and lay experts external to the National Institutes of Health, as well as leaders of major diabetes voluntary organizations. The reviews, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this document are solely those of the members of the Diabetes Research Working Group and do not necessarily reflect the positions or judgments of the National Institutes of Health, the Department of the Health and Human Services, or the Administration, which must weigh the competing requirements of multiple programs and activities.**