



April 7, 2006

House Takes Up Budget Resolution—Impact on NIH Funding TBD

Emboldened by the Senate's decision to add \$7 billion to health and education programs in late March, House champions sought the same from the House when representatives considered their version of the FY 2007 Budget Resolution.

On March 29, in the House Budget Committee, Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) offered an amendment to the Budget Resolution that would have added \$7 billion for health and education programs, of which \$1 billion would be directed toward NIH. The amendment failed in the fiscally conservative committee on a party line vote of 22-17. The Committee also capped the amount of money that can be "advanced funded" in the appropriations bills. The Specter-Harkin amendment, which provided the additional \$7 billion for health and education programs in the Senate version, did so by raising the cap on "advanced funded appropriations." Therefore, by including such language in the House Budget Resolution, the Committee took action to offset the Specter/Harkin amendment. In addition, the House Rules Committee failed to approve any amendments similar to the one offered by Senators Specter and Harkin in the Senate. No amendments are allowed during floor deliberations in the House unless the amendments have been approved prior to the floor debate by the House Rules Committee.

There has been growing discontent from moderate Republican members of the House who are concerned with the small budget increases for health and education programs. In early March, 23 moderate members sent a letter to House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-OH) seeking a 2 percent increase in non-defense, non-homeland security domestic spending. Led by Representative Mike Castle (R-DE), these members have also indicated they would not support a budget resolution that did not adequately support health and education programs. The House was scheduled to take up the Budget Resolution on the House floor April 6 but has delayed action until after the Easter recess.

Society's First Clinical Guidelines to Debut in May and June

The May and June issues of the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism (JCEM)*, will each feature one of the Society's first two clinical practice guidelines (CPGs): *Evaluation and Treatment of Adult Growth Hormone Deficiency* (May) and *Testosterone Therapy in Adult Men with Androgen Deficiency Syndromes* (June).

The Clinical Guidelines Subcommittee (CGS), chaired by Robert Vigersky, MD, manages the development of the Society's guidelines. The actual guidelines are developed by task forces made up of experts in the fields. The process for development is a rigorous and

comprehensive one, which ensures that the Society's guidelines are of the highest quality and that they are evidence-based. All guidelines are supported through the Society's Strategic Plan funding mechanism.

The guideline task force chairs for these two guidelines—Mark Molitch, MD, (Growth Hormone) and Shalender Bhasin, MD (Androgens in Men)—will each conduct workshops at ENDO 2006 in Boston, where they will discuss the content of the guidelines. The Growth Hormone session will take place on Saturday, June 24; and the Androgens in Men session will be held on Tuesday, June 27. See the ENDO program for details.

Several other Endocrine Society guidelines are in various stages of development and are expected to be published later this year, including *Therapeutic Use of Androgens in Women*, *Thyroid Disease in Pregnant and Postpartum Women*, *Pediatric Obesity*, and *Metabolic Syndrome*.

All Society guidelines will be available on the Society's Web site (<http://www.endo-society.org/quickcontent/clinicalpractice/clinical-guidelines/>) after publication in *JCEM*, and reprints will be available for purchase.

Senate Passes Resolution Raising Awareness of Cushing's Syndrome

A resolution sponsored by Senator James Inhofe (R-OK) designating April 8, 2006 as "National Cushing's Syndrome Awareness Day" was approved by the Senate on April 4. The need for heightened awareness of Cushing's Syndrome was brought to Senator Inhofe's attention by constituents who suffer from the disease. According to the Senator, "Doctors can detect Cushing's Syndrome through a series of tests, often using x-rays to examine adrenal or pituitary glands to locate tumors. However, since awareness of the syndrome is low, doctors do not always run these tests, and patients do not know to ask for them. Therefore, treatment for victims of Cushing's Syndrome often comes later than it should."

Specifically the resolution contains these provisions:

- Designates April 8, 2006 as "National Cushing's Syndrome Awareness Day".
- Recognizes that all Americans should be more informed and aware of Cushing's Syndrome.
- Requests that the President issue a proclamation calling upon the people of the United States to observe the date with appropriate ceremonies and activities.
- Directs the Secretary of the Senate to transmit a copy of this resolution to the Cushing's Understanding, Support & Help Organization.

FDA Asked to Remove Splenda from the Marketplace

A group has filed a Citizen Petition with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) asking that the agency disapprove the sweetener Splenda, also known as sucralose. The group, Citizens for Health, claims that there are mounting adverse event reports and growing health concerns associated with Splenda users. In addition, the group claims that the manufacturing plant used to make Splenda is releasing toxins into the environment.

Specifically, the group's report includes consumer complaints of headaches, rashes, and severe gastrointestinal problems. The petition also seeks to have Splenda's advertising claim "made from sugar so it acts like sugar," removed from its labeling because the claim suggests

that the product is suitable for people with diabetes. The petition also calls on the FDA to add a warning to any food containing the sweetener about the condition galactosemia, a metabolic disorder, because the sweetener contains a substance called galactose monosaccharide. Finally, the group calls for creation of a centralized mechanism at the FDA for obtaining adverse reaction reports to artificial sweeteners.

The maker of Splenda, McNeil Nutritionals, refutes the petition and claims the group Citizens for Health is largely supported by the The Sugar Association. They also cite “more than 100 studies conducted and evaluated over a 20-year period clearly demonstrate the safety of sucralose.”

The FDA’s current position is that sucralose is safe for its intended use as approved in 1998.

Dean of Stanford Medical School Comments on NIH Budget

A recent issue of the NIH Office of Extramural Research's new newsletter, “Nexus,” features an essay from Dr. Philip Pizzo, Dean of the Stanford University School of Medicine. The essay appeared in Tuesday’s *San Jose Mercury News* and commented on how budget pressures are jeopardizing the future of medical research. Dr. Pizzo writes, “At the turn of the 21st century, the federal government doubled the budget for the National Institutes of Health with the goal of securing its status as the most powerful medical research enterprise the world has ever seen. But later this week the House of Representatives could shed light on the government’s vision for the future of this agency--the driving force in the nation’s effort to find cures for cancer, heart disease and scores of other maladies. When the chamber votes on a budget resolution that addresses the agency’s funding, it will be a sign of whether a troubling budget trend has emerged: the ‘undoubling’ of the NIH.”

To view the full story in *The Mercury News*, click on:

<http://www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/news/opinion/14258581.htm>. For more information about electronic grant administration, the Pathway to Independence Award, and other articles from *Nexus*, click on: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/nexus.htm>.

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