



May 9, 2007

The Endocrine Society Takes its Advocacy Agenda to the Hill

On April 26, 2007 members of the Society's Government Relations Committee (GRC) took to the halls of Congress to advance the Society's advocacy agenda. The Committee members focused on the issues of federal research funding, imaging cuts, and bioidentical hormones.

Much of the work of the Society has focused on increasing biomedical research funding. The GRC members took the Society's message on the need for increased funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to the offices of Senators Harkin (D-IA), Durbin (D-IL), and Salazar (D-CO), and Representatives Kirk (D-IL) and Bernice Johnson (D-TX), all of whom have been strong advocates for biomedical research in the past. The Society's members argued that the breakthroughs in areas of endocrine research—such as diabetes and obesity—that appeared on the horizon after the doubling period are in jeopardy of being abandoned due to sharp decreases in NIH funding from Congress. The President has proposed providing the National Institutes of Health (NIH) with a budget of \$28.7 billion for FY 2008, which would be a decrease of \$230 million from FY 2007. Under this scenario, the NIH budget would fall 12 percent from 2004 to 2008 when adjusted for biomedical research inflation. In addition to advocating for overall NIH funding, GRC members voiced the Society's support for continued funding of the Type 1 Diabetes Strategic Plan of the National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive & Kidney Diseases.

Society members visited key Senate and House offices to raise awareness of the need for greater regulation of compounded bioidentical hormones. The visits occurred one week after Society president Leonard Wartofsky, MD, testified on the issue before the Senate Special Committee on Aging. During his testimony, President Wartofsky called for increased regulation of compounded bioidentical hormones in order to ensure that patients are receiving safe and effective hormone therapies. GRC members visited staff of Aging Committee members, Senators McCaskill (D-MO) and Salazar, and staff of Senator Kennedy (D-MA) who is considering introducing legislation to regulate compounding pharmacies. The issue was also discussed in the offices of Senator Durbin and Representatives McCarthy (D-NY), Shimkus (R-IL), Inslee (D-OR), Kirk, and Bernice Johnson.

During the past year, Society staff has been focused on reducing the impact of the Deficit Reduction Act (DRA) imaging cuts on Society members who provide DXA services in their offices. Under the DRA cuts, the reimbursement rate for DXA will be reduced almost 75 percent by 2010, limiting the ability of most private practice physicians to provide the service in their offices. The GRC members visited with the sponsor of the "Access to Medicare

Imaging Act of 2007” (HR 1293), Representative McCarthy, to thank her for her advocacy on this issue. HR 1293—which impacts many imaging procedures—and the impact of the payment cuts on DXA specifically, was also discussed with staff members in the offices of Representatives Carnahan (D-MO), Inslee, Kirk, and Bernice Johnson.

For further information on the Society’s advocacy issues, please contact the Government & Public Affairs Department at govt-prof@endo-society.org.

The Endocrine Society Awards Five Research Grants

In light of the scarcity of federal research dollars, The Endocrine Society has instituted a Bridge Grant program to provide interim funding for promising research projects that have experienced an interruption in funding. The first application cycle saw several outstanding applications, and five awards were granted. A list of the individuals receiving grants and the titles of their projects appears below. For more information on the program and the first round winners, please go to: <http://www.endo-society.org/publicpolicy/bridge-grants/index.cfm>.

The second application deadline has now passed and the applications are being reviewed. Interest in the program has remained strong. During both application cycles, the Society received inquiries from members who were interested in applying, but who did not meet one or more eligibility requirements. The Bridge Grant Review Group is considering whether adjustments to the eligibility criteria are necessary to increase the pool of eligible applicants. If you are interested in the program but do not meet the eligibility requirements, the Society would like to hear from you. Please send any comments to Loretta Doan at ldoan@endo-society.org by May 15, 2007.

Inaugural Winners

Roberto Civitelli, MD

- Washington University School of Medicine
- Regulation of Osteogenesis by Cadherins
 - The central hypothesis of this proposal is that interactions among osteoblasts and between osteoblasts and skeletal stem cells mediated by N-cadherin and cadherin-11 control bone mass development and maintenance via modulation of skeletal stem cell lineage allocation and osteogenic differentiation.

Gloria E. Hoffman, PhD

- University of Maryland School of Medicine
- cFos Maps Activation of LHRH Neurons
 - The proposed studies provide new insights into how the brain regulates ovulation and will fill important gaps in our understanding of how these mechanisms compare across rodent and primate species.

Walter L. Miller, MD

- University of California, San Francisco
- Molecular Biology of Steroidogenic P450 Enzymes

- The Steroidogenic Acute Regulatory (StAR) protein facilitates the first step of steroidogenesis. The studies proposed here will elucidate key aspects of the mechanism of StAR activity.

Sham S. Kakar, PhD

- University of Louisville School of Medicine
- PTTG Role in Ovarian Tumor Tumorigenesis and Metastasis
 - Pituitary tumor transforming gene (PTTG) is a potent oncogene found in human testis and ovarian tumors. This proposal is focused on determining the effect of cell-specific expression of PTTG on ovarian tumor development and determining its molecular mechanisms in tumorigenesis and progression.

Gary M. Leong, MBBS, FRACP, PhD

- Mater Children's Hospital and Institute for Molecular Biosciences, Brisbane, University of Queensland, Australia
- Molecular Regulation of Metabolism and Body Composition by Ski via Crosstalk with Nuclear Hormone Receptor Signaling
 - The Ski transcription factor and members of the nuclear hormone receptor gene superfamily are involved in determining body composition. The major objective of this project is to characterize the role and molecular mechanisms of Ski-mediated alteration in body composition and metabolism.

Reporting Chronic Care Measures in PQRI

Endocrinologists and other providers who voluntarily participate in the Physician Quality Reporting Initiative (PQRI) beginning July 1st will be able to report chronic disease measures from tests that were performed on a patient prior to the start of the PQRI program, even if the test was ordered by another medical professional.

For example, if a patient with diabetes visits an endocrinologist in July but had just had an HbA1c test in June, the endocrinologist can report that quality measure, even if it was ordered by another treating physician. In determining whether a prior test may be reported, physicians should use the timeframe identified in the measure specifications as a guide. Using the previous example, quality measure specifications indicate that an HbA1c should be reported once during a 12 month period. According to *Part B News*, every physician who sees the patient for diabetes-related reasons, regardless of whether he or she performed the test, should report the HbA1c measure one time during the July-December reporting period (*Part B News*, April 30 2007). This ruling is to help safeguard against the unnecessary duplication of tests for the sole purpose of reporting quality measures. All tests must still pass Medicare's medical necessity standards in order for a provider to be reimbursed for a procedure.

To provide proper documentation for chronic care measures, be sure to include a modifier on claim forms when appropriate. This will ensure that the quality measure is counted toward the 80 percent threshold each provider must reach to qualify for the 1.5 percent bonus. Reporting quality measures related to chronic conditions at least once during the July 1-December 31, 2007 reporting period will improve providers' chances of qualifying for the 1.5 percent bonus available to participants.

Additional information on this topic can be found on CMS' Web site at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/pqri>. Society staff will continue to report new information on the PQRI program in upcoming issues of *Endocrine Insider*.

House and Senate Pass Separate Versions of NSF Reauthorization

The House passed the National Science Foundation (NSF) Reauthorization Act of 2007 (HR 1867) on May 2, 2007 by a vote of 399 to 17. The bill authorizes appropriations for NSF for FY 2008-2010, calling for \$6.5 billion in FY 2008, \$6.98 billion in FY 2009, and \$7.49 billion in FY 2010. Specific allocations outlined in the bill include: (1) research and related activities; (2) education and human resources; (3) major research equipment and facilities construction; (4) agency operations and award management; (5) the Office of the National Science Board; and (6) the Office of the Inspector General. The legislation also directs the National Science Board to evaluate the role of NSF in supporting interdisciplinary research and the effectiveness of NSF's efforts to engage undergraduate students in research experiences in interdisciplinary settings. The Scientific Communications Act of 2007, which was introduced by Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-CA) as a standalone bill, was adopted as an amendment to HR 1867. The amendment creates a new competitive grants program at NSF to fund institutional programs in communication skills development for scientists, but provides very little detail on what such programs should entail, leaving that to the applicant institutions. The programs must be integrated with existing NSF training programs, such as the Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) program. The amendment designates new money at a level of \$10 million per year for the program.

The Senate reauthorized NSF through passage of S 761, the "America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science Act." The bill, which was passed by a vote of 88-8 on April 25, 2007, calls for appropriations of \$6.7 billion in FY 2008, \$7.7 billion in FY 2009, \$8.89 billion in FY 2010, and \$10.2 billion in FY 2011. The bill also requires the Director of NSF to expand the Graduate Research Fellowship Program and the Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship Program; establish a clearinghouse and pilot programs relating to the creation or improvement of professional science master's degree programs; establish a program to provide mentors for women interested in careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and establish a program of basic research in advanced information and communications technologies. The bill was sent to the House for consideration on April 30th but has not been scheduled for a vote at this time.

It is unclear how the two houses of Congress will reconcile the different versions of the bill. Society staff will continue to monitor activity on both bills and will report any progress in future editions of *Endocrine Insider*.

For questions regarding articles listed in *Endocrine Insider* or information on advocacy and policy activities within The Endocrine Society, contact the Government & Public Affairs department:

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