NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE (NCI) REPORT:
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following are answers for some common questions you may have about the NCI report:

**What is the report about?**

- The report is a “scientific framework” (similar to a strategic plan) for advancing research into pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma, which accounts for approximately 95 percent of all pancreatic cancer cases.

- It builds on another NCI report released in June 2013 describing four recommended research initiatives for pancreatic cancer research developed by a working group of the NCI and other scientific experts, including the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network’s Vice President of Research and Medical Affairs, Lynn Matrisian.

The new report highlights the same four recommended research initiatives and provides a specific recommendation for moving forward for each:

1. **Understanding the biological relationship between pancreatic cancer and diabetes**
   - The NCI and the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, together with the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, sponsored a joint meeting in June 2013 that explored the links between diabetes, pancreatitis and pancreatic cancer as an initial step towards this initiative.
   - The new report indicates that there may be a new funding opportunity announcement for expanding research in this area.

2. **Evaluating screening protocols for biomarkers for early detection of pancreatic cancer and its precursors**
   - The report indicates that the NCI will issue a Program Announcement in the next 12 months to focus on the development of novel methods to obtain and interrogate pancreatic tissues containing pre-cancerous lesions. The NCI typically uses Program Announcements when they are interested in receiving grant proposals in a specific area, but there are no funds that are set-aside for this purpose. This highlights the need for us to continue to push for increased funding for the NCI. [Click here](#) to see how you can help with this effort.

3. **Studying new therapeutic strategies in immunotherapy**
   - The report states that the Cancer Immunotherapy Trials Network (CITN), which employs the collective expertise of expert academic immunologists together with the NCI, foundation and industrial partners, will design and conduct cancer therapy trials with the most promising immunotherapy agents in pancreatic cancer.

4. **Developing new treatment approaches that interfere with RAS oncogene-dependent signaling pathways**
   - The report describes a recently announced major initiative to develop drugs that target KRAS, a gene that is mutated in the vast majority of pancreatic cancer cases. The project is being led by Frank McCormick, PhD, FRS, a member of the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network Scientific Advisory Board, and involves scientists from the NCI and many academic institutions.
Are there any concerns about the report?

- The Pancreatic Cancer Action Network believes that this report provides valuable recommendations that, if fully implemented, will help advance pancreatic cancer research and improve patient outcomes.

- At the same time, it is not clear from the report how certain provisions of the statute will be accomplished. For example, there is a provision that discusses the importance of creating a robust research community made up of scientists from varied disciplines to tackle this very difficult disease but does not specify how this will happen or how it will be measured. We look forward to working with the NCI and the pancreatic cancer community to accomplish this goal and to ensure that the recommendations are fully implemented.

- In order to fully leverage the recommendations in the report, it will be critical for the NCI to have sufficient resources. We therefore will be continuing our leadership in advocacy efforts focused on increasing the NCI’s budget. Please consider attending the 2014 Pancreatic Cancer Advocacy Day in Washington, DC, to help with this effort. Click to register today.

Why is this report important?
The Pancreatic Cancer Action Network has long advocated to ensure that there is a national strategic plan and accountability for making progress toward improving the survival rate for pancreatic cancer. The release of this report, the identification of priority research initiatives in pancreatic cancer and the commitment from the NCI to take specific action on these initiatives is a win for the entire pancreatic cancer community.

What will the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network be doing to ensure that the recommendations are fully implemented?
The Pancreatic Cancer Action Network looks forward to working with the NCI, our colleagues in the pancreatic cancer community and Congress to fully implement the recommendations and ensure that the final action plan includes all of the provisions of the statute. Just as importantly, we will continue our leadership in ensuring that the NCI has sufficient and sustained resources to fulfill the promise offered by this report.

How do the recommendations in the report relate to the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network’s research priorities and grants program?
The Pancreatic Cancer Action Network is pleased that our research and scientific affairs program, including our grants program, complements the NCI’s focus and recommendations. Moving forward, we will continue to ensure that our efforts create synergy when combined with the NCI’s efforts.

Where can I get a copy of the report?
You can find the report here.

How can I help ensure that the report’s recommendations are fully implemented?
Please consider attending the 2014 Pancreatic Cancer Advocacy Day in Washington, DC, June 16-17. Click here for more information and to register.