

Biomedical Research Budget Cuts Hit

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NEW YORK, Nov. 30—The man that President Nixon picked to oversee the nation's war on cancer attacked the White House today for cutting the total federal budget for biomedical research. He said these cuts are hurting the cancer program even though that program had received an increased budget.

"Neither the cancer program nor biomedical research generally can thrive" if budgets for research in basic sciences and metabolic diseases are cut, Benno C. Schmidt told a conference here on cancer virology and immunology.

"At the time we were urging on the Congress and the administration a greater effort on cancer, we were explicit in the position that the increased cancer effort should not be at the expense of other biomedical research.

"I must confess that I, for one, did not believe that would happen," said Schmidt,

a Wall Street investment banker who was appointed by Mr. Nixon two years ago as chairman of the President's Cancer Panel.

Nevertheless, the total budgets for the National Institutes of Health—except for the cancer and heart institutes, the two presidential favorites—have decreased over the past three years. In 1972 the budget research totaled \$878 million for non-cancer and heart. In the president's 1974 budget, he allocated \$767 million for those programs.

The budget for the National Institute of General Medical Science, which does much of the basic research needed to find the causes of cancer, dropped from \$166 million in 1972 to \$139 million in the 1974 budget.

"I am not at all sure that the cancer effort has been the cause of the other institutes getting less," Schmidt said, "but it is difficult to prove to the contrary when the cuts, in fact, have taken place.

The fact is," he continued,

"that this country cannot afford to reduce these efforts at this time."

This is the sharpest criticism that Schmidt, a Republican who supported President Nixon in the 1968 and 1972 elections, has leveled at the White House since he took the job of overseeing the cancer program.

He started pushing for an expanded cancer program in 1970, when former Sen. Ralph Yarborough (D-Tex.), then chairman of the Senate Health subcommittee, named him to head a citizen's panel to study cancer research.

Schmidt also criticized the White House's Office of Management and Budget for cutting the NIH's training grants and fellowship programs to develop new research scientists. He called OMB's action "my biggest disappointment as chairman of the President's panel."

As a result of pressure from scientists and from Schmidt, the OMB relented and announced a \$30 million pro-

gram for this year that will grow to \$60 million in 1975 and \$90 million in 1976.

Of that, the cancer program would get \$18 million, only \$2 million less than its peak years.

Nevertheless, Schmidt said, "the total program of NIH would only be about half of what it formerly was, and this is not, in my opinion, sufficient."

While criticizing the cutbacks in research funds and training grants, Schmidt said there has been "a great deal of progress" in the cancer program since Congress passed and the President signed the conquest of cancer act two years ago.

"As recently as two years ago," Schmidt said, "cancer research and biomedical research generally were on the back burner."

In 1970, for example, federal expenditures on cancer totaled \$180 million. By 1973, the spending had jumped to \$432 million and in 1974 it will be at least \$500 million.