

FUND FOR CANCER

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\$100-Million Extra Is Sought—Goals Set for Health Care

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 22 — President Nixon announced tonight that he would ask Congress for an extra \$100-million for an intensive effort to conquer cancer.

That much extra money for the next fiscal year would come close to doubling the nation's current research effort against this group of diseases, which kills over 300,000 Americans yearly.

"The time has come when the same kind of concentrated effort that split the atom and took man to the moon should be turned toward conquering this dread disease," Mr. Nixon said. "Let us make a total national commitment to achieve this goal."

He said in his State of the Union Message that he would ask later for whatever additional funds could be effectively used for that purpose.

Basic Care Needed

Earlier in his address the President said he would propose a program to insure "that no American family will be prevented from obtaining basic medical care by inability to pay." He said he would propose a major increase in, and redirection, of aid to medical schools to increase the number of doctors and other health personnel.

He said he would propose "incentives to improve the delivery of health services, to get more medical care resources into those areas that have not been adequately served, to make greater use of medical assistants and to slow the alarming rise of in the costs of medical care."

Shortly before Christmas a group of prominent scientists, philanthropists and leaders in business and labor urged Congress to approve a major crusade against cancer and to set up a separate agency to oversee the task.

Sources in the Government indicated that the idea of a separate agency was probably not at the forefront of thinking now. The specific strategy for using the money was not specified in the President's address.

It is understood that the money, if appropriated, will be spent primarily for research, not for cancer treatment. It appears not to have been decided what agency will spend the money or how.

At present the main governmental agency for sponsoring medical and biological research is the National Institutes of Health. Specifically one unit of this organization, the National Cancer Institute, has had the clearest commitment to cancer research. It provides the bulk of the money available

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for this purpose in the United States today.

Doubt on Flexibility

There has been some doubt, however, among specialists in and outside of Government that the institutes can be flexible enough and sufficiently imaginative to guide properly a new effort of this kind.

The presumption is that the Administration may seek ways of making the existing research organization more flexible and responsive to good new ideas for the attack on the huge and complex cancer problem.

No matter what administrative arrangements are worked out there are several areas of science that seem almost certain to get expanded support if Congress agrees to the cancer crusade. Two of these are the related realms of virus research and immunology. Others likely to be high on the list of priorities are cell biology, including cell genetics, and the search for a better understanding of environmental factors among the causes of cancer.

There have been major advances in all of these areas

during the last decade, and many cancer scientists believe the time is ripe for a big effort to exploit that progress.

Viruses are known to cause many animal species, but no cancers of various kinds in one has yet proved that any virus causes any cancer in man.

The Need for Proof

There is much circumstantial evidence, however, suggesting that viruses are a factor in at least some forms of cancer such as leukemia and sarcoma. Leukemia and closely related types of cancer affect the body's blood-forming system. Sarcomas are cancers that may arise from such tissues as bone, fat and connective tissue.

If a virus cause of any form of cancer was proved, it might be possible to make a vaccine against it or to use the knowledge in other ways to combat the disease.

In recent years scientists have learned much that is pertinent to cancer about the body's internal immunological defenses. A long-range possibility here might be to enhance a person's immunological capacity against the cancer tissue itself to help destroy the cancer.

It is an immunological defense system that causes the body to form protective antibodies against viruses, bacteria and other germs.

The immunological defenses that might be brought into play against cancer would be somewhat different, but related to the infection-fighting system.

Cell biologists and cell geneticists would think in terms of doing things to change the basic machinery of the cancer cells, either to destroy these cells or perhaps even to turn them back to normalcy. Some of these ideas are on the rather far horizon, but there are at least theoretical reasons for considering them potentially possible.

There are also some experts who believe the environmental aspects of cancer need far more attention and could be powerfully exploited for cancer prevention.

Some of these ideas were brought forward last month by the committee of 26 prominent citizens that urged an all-out effort against this group of diseases. This panel of consultants on the conquest of cancer had been appointed by the Senate Committee on Labor

and Public Welfare. The panel's report was made to that committee.

Knowledge Still to Come

There are basic differences, however, between the problem of conquering cancer and the problems of developing an atomic bomb and sending men to the moon. In those two latter projects, the basis scientific knowledge was almost entirely in hand before the big developmental efforts began. The two efforts were triumphs of engineering, but they capitalized on scientific discoveries that had been made years and even decades earlier.

In the case of cancer much fundamental scientific knowledge remains to be gained. Some scientists doubt that a Manhattan project approach similar to the effort that built the atomic bomb during World War II is appropriate now against cancer.

Some scientists believe that extra money could well be spent on a wide range of research projects in basic biomedical research and that these fundamental studies might be as good a way as any of hastening the conquest of cancer.