



October 6, 2009

Dear Members of the Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) Steering Committee and Guests:

I was honored to receive an invitation to your meeting and deeply regret that I cannot join you in person. I fully recognize that a change in Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) can leave grantees wondering how existing programs and directions might be affected. I believe you will be encouraged by how well the strategic goals that you have endorsed for the CTSA consortium align with the five major priorities that I have presented for the NIH.

The first NIH theme is to “take advantage of advances in high-throughput technologies to understand the fundamentals of biology and to uncover the causes of specific diseases.” This must be a familiar focus for you as many of your institutions and projects are benefitting from faster data acquisition from high-throughput DNA sequencing, new imaging modalities, and computational biology.

My second theme, which is “emphasizing the translation of research into medicine,” connects directly with a key CTSA ambition: increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of all aspects of the translation process, beginning with discovery research and culminating in new prevention and treatment strategies. The CTSA’s are attacking systematically the barriers to moving basic discoveries into preclinical studies by addressing issues of intellectual property and public-private partnerships. The increasing involvement by academic centers in the drug development pipeline, the development of metrics in the conduct of clinical trials, and increased reciprocity among Institutional Review Boards, are all positive steps in enhancing the efficiency of the clinical research process.

A third theme is to “put science to work for the benefit of health care reform through comparative effectiveness research, behavioral science, health information technology, health economics research and further research on health disparities.” CTSA’s have enormous potential in comparative effectiveness research when it comes to tackling some of the important targets identified by the recent IOM report, as well as contributing new approaches to study design and analysis and establishing close working relationships with communities throughout the Nation.

Placing a greater focus on global health is the fourth theme. As CTSA principal investigators, you are in an excellent position to form partnerships within your institutions and across the consortium that will expand our global outreach in training and career development.

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The fifth theme is to “empower the biomedical research community by emphasizing resource development, training, workforce diversity, and stimulation of innovation through peer review.” I know that your momentum continues to build at the local, regional, and national levels as you develop partnerships with minority institutions, as well as with academic institutions that do not have medical schools. You are training in a robust fashion the next generations of clinical and translational researchers to work together in interdisciplinary teams.

I am learning about your successes and about the expectations for the consortium from multiple sources. I look forward to supporting you as you work with your numerous constituencies: the Institutes and Centers of the NIH, Congress, your individual institutions, and, most importantly, the patients and public who are counting on all of you to advance research that will improve human health.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Francis S. Collins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D.
Director