

CDMRP

Executive Summary

In 1971, President Nixon signed the National Cancer Act into law and declared a national “War on Cancer.” Consequently, this declaration initiated a response from the U.S. Government, the American public, and the scientific community to eliminate cancer. One such notable response came from the breast cancer advocacy community who launched a grassroots effort to raise public awareness of the crucial need for increased funding of breast cancer research. Congress responded to this movement in fiscal year 1993 with a \$210 million appropriation for peer-reviewed breast cancer research. Subsequently, the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP) was established within the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command (USAMRMC) to manage the newly founded Breast Cancer Research Program (BCRP).

The U.S. Army recognized that, while it was experienced in medical research, breast cancer research was outside its core expertise. Therefore, the Army sought advice from the National Academy of Sciences Institute of Medicine (IOM) on how to effectively manage this new research program. Two of the recommendations from the IOM have become cornerstones in the administration of the CDMRP: developing an annual investment strategy and employing a two-tiered review process.

The success of the BCRP, combined with the ongoing work of consumer advocates and the need for

focused biomedical research, led to continuation of the BCRP and the addition of other targeted biomedical research programs managed by the CDMRP including prostate and ovarian cancers, neurofibromatosis, chronic myelogenous leukemia, tuberous sclerosis, autism spectrum disorders, and a number of military health-related research programs including programs focused on post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, Gulf War illnesses, and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. In total, the CDMRP has managed over \$4.36 billion and 7,522 research grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements.

The achievements of the CDMRP can be attributed, in part, to continual process improvements.

Through the years, the CDMRP has developed best business practices that are applied to all aspects of program management and execution. The top five business practices are highlighted throughout this annual report and include:

- ❖ **“Outside-the-box” Thinking**
- ❖ **Rigorous Proposal Submission/ Review Processes**
- ❖ **Supporting People and Partnerships**
- ❖ **Good Stewardship**
- ❖ **Open Communication**

Thinking “Outside-the-Box”

The overall goal of each of CDMRP’s research programs is to find and fund the best research to eradicate disease. Accomplishing this task requires a culture of innovation and flexibility that spans the entire program cycle. This includes the recruitment of visionary scientists, clinicians, and consumer advocates to sit on each program’s Integration Panel (IP), advise each program regarding the specific needs within an area of research (vision setting), and develop novel funding mechanisms to support innovative research and fill gaps within the research community. These funding mechanisms frequently emphasize the exploration of revolutionary concepts or ideas that could have a large impact on the disease of interest. Such ideas are often viewed as risky, and as such, are not supported by other, more traditional funding agencies. Alternatively, funding mechanisms may be designed to recruit new investigators into a field of research, either through training the next generation of researchers, or by supporting established researchers who wish to apply their expertise to a new field of research. The incorporation of new ideas taken from other fields and alternative approaches to research problems are critical to the advancement of science and the eradication of disease.



Rigorous Proposal Submission/Review Processes

The CDMRP has developed a novel two-tiered process for evaluating and selecting research proposals. The two-tiered system was originally recommended by the IOM and involves reviewing every research proposal for scientific merit as well as programmatic relevance. These two levels of review are performed at separate times by separate panels of experts—the first by “peer reviewers” selected for their expertise in a given field of research and the second by the IP. The two tiers of review work together to ensure that proposals selected for funding are both scientifically sound and address the unique vision and goals of the program.



Processes have been put in place to ensure the integrity of both peer and programmatic review. Potential conflicts of interest are avoided to ensure that individuals do not participate in both peer

and programmatic review in the same funding cycle and that individuals with potential conflicts do not participate in the review of those proposals. In addition, the CDMRP established an Inquiry Review Panel to address queries and complaints by applicants who feel an error was made

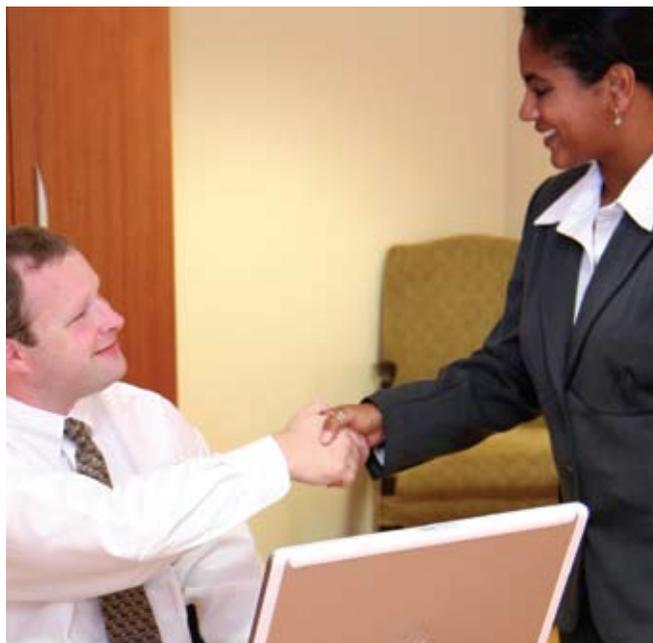
during the review of their proposal. While only 1 percent of all funding decisions are appealed across CDMRP programs, this process is integral to the integrity of the review and funding process.

People and Partnerships

Partnerships are crucial to the management and execution of each of the programs administered by the CDMRP. The CDMRP collaborates with other organizations and communities to facilitate the exchange of ideas and knowledge, thereby reducing redundancy across the research spectrum. In addition, the CDMRP has recognized the value of firsthand experience with disease since its inception and has led the way in incorporating disease survivors (consumer advocates) into every aspect of program execution. Consumer advocates sit side-by-side with scientists and clinicians on the IP for each program as they have since 1993. In addition, consumer advocates have participated in the peer review process for research proposals since 1995. Furthermore, consumers are active participants in the execution and/or oversight of some of the research projects funded by the CDMRP.

The CDMRP also partners with other funding organizations to maximize its research investment and avoid duplication of efforts. The CDMRP is a founding member of the International Cancer Research Partnership (ICRP), which currently includes 50 cancer funding organizations across the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Initially, the ICRP was formed to classify each organization's research portfolio using a common scheme, called the Common Scientific Outline (CSO). Similarly, the CDMRP is a member of the Gynecological Cancer Foundation Allied Support Group, which functions to initiate collaborations among organizations focused on the prevention and early detection of gynecological cancers through annual meetings.

There are numerous other examples of collaborations and partnerships that are key to the success of the CDMRP and its research programs. These include the multidisciplinary meetings hosted by individual research programs, research collaborations supported by team-oriented award mechanisms that encourage researchers to work together toward a common goal, and partnerships with other government agencies such as the Department of Defense Small Business Innovation Research/Small Business Technology Transfer programs and the Breast Cancer Research Semipostal Program. Each of these relationships allows the CDMRP to leverage its resources and make the largest possible impact on targeted areas of interest.



Good Stewardship and Open Communication

The CDMRP exists because of a unique partnership between the public, Congress, and the U.S. military. As such, the CDMRP has a responsibility to use its appropriations judiciously and maintain the highest standard of ethics in all its practices. The



CDMRP strives to keep its management costs as low as possible and to utilize the most efficient and effective processes for managing the research funded by its programs. The CDMRP has developed electronic processes to facilitate efficient grants management and eliminate paper processing of grants, from proposal receipt through grant close-out. In addition, the CDMRP maintains a program evaluation division to continually examine CDMRP processes and ensure that each program is addressing its goals.

Public awareness of how congressional funds are used and managed is a critical component to the success of the CDMRP. Therefore, the CDMRP acknowledges the importance of disseminating program information to all its stakeholders. The CDMRP website (<http://cdmrp.army.mil>) contains up-to-date program information that is available to the research community and the general public at all times. Information on each of CDMRP's research programs, funding opportunities, funded research projects, and consumer advocate involvement can be found here. In addition, funding opportunities are distributed to research administrators, professional organizations, federal agencies, and consumer advocacy organizations and are also posted on other websites that focus on biomedical grant notification. Furthermore, the CDMRP maintains a display that is exhibited at national scientific meetings with personnel who are equipped to address questions and concerns raised by meeting participants and also disseminate information about CDMRP programs and initiatives.



CDMRP: Cutting-Edge Research

The vision of the CDMRP is to find and fund the best research to eradicate diseases and support the warfighter for the benefit of the American public. We are committed to this vision and believe we are moving forward toward our goal. Through a commitment to cutting-edge research and administrative processes, we have supported significant advancements against our targeted diseases. This document takes a closer look at some of our accomplishments and future goals.

