Talking Points –Blue Ribbon Panel/National Cancer Moonshot Initiative

The Blue Ribbon Panel and Its Charge

- The Vice President’s commitment to advancing cancer research is grounded in the belief that we are at a tipping point where bolstering resources and breaking down barriers could substantially accelerate progress against cancer.

- To advance the initiative, NCI has formed a Blue Ribbon Panel of scientific experts, cancer leaders, and patient advocates that will inform the scientific direction and goals at NCI of the Vice President initiative.

- The panel serves as a working group of the presidency-appointed National Cancer Advisory Board (NCAB) and is providing scientific guidance from thought-leaders in the cancer community.

- The 28-member panel was announced on April 4, and held its first meeting on April 11. The Panel will meet for the second time on Monday, April 18 at 8:30 am Central Time at the AACR annual meeting in New Orleans.

- Over the next several months, the panel will consider how to advance several proposed themes: advancing cancer clinical trials; enhanced data sharing; dissemination & population sciences; immunotherapy & immunoprevention; pediatric cancer; tumor evolution & progression; and other exceptional opportunities.

- The panel will form working groups around the final set of themes. Recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel working groups will be reported to the NCAB. The NCAB will advise the NCI director based on its consideration of the panel’s recommendations, expected to be delivered later this summer. A final report by the White House Cancer Moonshot Task Force, chaired by Vice President Biden, will be produced and delivered to the President by Dec. 31, 2016.

Submitting Ideas to the Blue Ribbon Panel

- The cancer community and the American public are encouraged to submit ideas and insights to help inform the panel’s deliberations in the theme areas.

- There are three ways to submit idea:
  - Go to CancerResearchIdeas.cancer.gov
  - Email NCI at cancerresearch@nih.gov
  - Call the Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER

- The public may also subscribe to updates on the initiative’s main website: www.cancer.gov/moonshot-cancer-initiative
Support for the Vice President’s Cancer Initiative

- The Vice President’s enthusiasm is welcomed by the community of researchers, health professionals, and patients who share his passion and belief that great things are possible by accelerating cancer research with leadership and resources. We are committed to breaking down silos and stimulating the groundbreaking work already underway. To be successful, we must hear a broad range of perspectives to take full advantage of the exceptional current opportunities in cancer research. (*From April 4 NCI BRP press release, quote by NCI Acting Director Doug Lowy, M.D.*)

- **NCI, the cancer community, and the American public are encouraged to work together to advance the National Cancer Moonshot Initiative.** The Vice President’s deep commitment to advancing cancer research is welcomed by NCI, researchers, health professionals, and patients, who share his passion and belief that we have reached a moment in time when great things are possible with resources and leadership.
  - This national commitment to accelerate progress and fundamentally change the outlook for cancer patients must have goals and approaches grounded in the best science.
  - Success of the Moonshot Initiative will depend on our ability to break down silos and encourage everyone with an interest in fighting cancer to work together, share information, and collaborate on solutions.

- **NCI has convened a Blue Ribbon Panel to inform the Initiative’s scientific direction and goals.** The Panel brings together the best, most innovative thinking of the entire nation, affording the Initiative the opportunity to build on groundbreaking research and make unprecedented improvements in prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.
  - The panel members represent a broad range of scientific areas, including biology, immunology, genomics, diagnostics, bioinformatics, and cancer prevention and treatment. Scientific members include investigators with expertise in clinical trials and cancer health disparities. Members of cancer advocacy groups and pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies are also represented on the panel and its working groups.
  - The panel is considering how to advance the themes that have been proposed for the Initiative. In addition to guiding future research, the panel will recommend strategies to increase the availability and use of current best-known approaches for prevention, screening, and treatment to benefit more patients.

Moonshot Milestones & Background

- **State of the Union Address:** During his State of the Union address on January 12, 2016, the President announced plans for a national initiative to accelerate efforts on cancer and called on Vice President Joe Biden to lead the effort. Calling the initiative a cancer “moonshot,” he said America must use its spirit of innovation to help tackle the challenge, accelerate progress in the fight against cancer, break down silos that present barriers, and bring cancer therapies to more patients, more quickly.
• *Presidential Memo*: On January 28, President Obama issued an official memorandum establishing a White House Cancer Moonshot Task Force, consisting of heads of relevant executive branch departments, federal agencies and offices. The memo stated that the Task Force should consult with external experts from relevant scientific sectors, including the Presidentially appointed National Cancer Advisory Board (NCAB) that advises the NCI director.

• *President’s Budget*: The President’s FY 2017 budget, released on February 9, proposes $1 billion for the National Cancer Moonshot Initiative, including $680 million for research at the NIH.

• *Blue Ribbon Panel Announcement*: NCI announced the members of the Blue Ribbon Panel on April 4 in a press release and on its website. [http://www.cancer.gov/research/key-initiatives/moonshot-cancer-initiative/blue-ribbon-panel](http://www.cancer.gov/research/key-initiatives/moonshot-cancer-initiative/blue-ribbon-panel)

**White House Charge for the Blue Ribbon Panel**
The Blue Ribbon Panel, a working group of the NCAB, will provide expert advice on the vision, proposed scientific goals, and implementation of the National Cancer Moonshot Initiative. The Panel will consider how to best advance the themes proposed for the Moonshot, including the development of cancer vaccines, highly sensitive approaches to early detection, advances in immunotherapy and combination therapies, single-cell genomic profiling of cancer cells and cells in the tumor microenvironment, enhanced data sharing, and new approaches to the treatment of pediatric cancers. The panel may also recommend other cancer research activities to enhance this effort. Through its deliberations, the Panel will provide an intensive examination of the opportunities and impediments in cancer research.

**How the Moonshot differs from the Precision Medicine Initiative for Oncology (PMI-O)**

• The four scientific goals of the PMI-O – expand precision medicine clinical trials; overcome drug resistance; develop new laboratory models for research; and develop a national cancer knowledge system for data sharing – focus exclusively on treatment of cancer. These efforts are complementary to the proposed focus areas under the National Cancer Moonshot Initiative. NCI is pursuing both initiatives simultaneously, with the ultimate goal of enhancing cancer prevention and treatment through multiple, patient-centered approaches.

• The PMI-O was announced exactly one year before the National Cancer Moonshot Initiative. In a sense, the PMI-O may be considered to be a smaller, subset under the umbrella of the larger Moonshot, but it remains a distinct entity.

**Resources**

1. [White House Memorandum](#)
2. [White House Fact Sheet: Investing in the National Cancer Moonshot](#)
3. [Blue Ribbon Panel information](#)
4. [NCI’s Blue Ribbon Panel Press Release](#)