

MINUTES OF THE BREAST CANCER RESEARCH COUNCIL MEETING

April 4, 1995, 9:00 A.M.

Kaiser Center, Oakland

Council Members Present: Lisa Bailey, Christopher Benz, Leah Cartabruno, Susan Claymon, William Comer, Patricia Ganz, Adeline Johnson Hackett, Deborah Johnson, Mary-Claire King, Liana Lianov, Andrea Martin, Susan Shinagawa, Bernarese Wheatley

Council Members Absent: John Link

Staff Present: Renee Drellishak, Charles L. Gruder, Annette McCoubrey, Walter Price

The morning session of the BCRC meeting was closed to staff, while the Evaluation and Oversight subcommittee presented their findings to the rest of the Council. The afternoon session began with a working lunch. The council was joined at this time by BCRP staff and Vice President of Health Affairs Cornelius Hopper.

Cycle 1 Grant Application Review

The session began with a discussion of the reviewer selection status for the Cycle 1 grant application study sections, to be held over a three week period during the month of May. Applications were received Monday, April 3. Staff has been working to complete the panels of reviewers for the study sections and would appreciate nominations from the Council, especially for industry representatives. The Council expressed their willingness to assist in identifying possible reviewers. Study sections will consist of approximately 10-12 reviewers depending on the number of applications received in each subject area. Staff will endeavor to keep the Council informed on the progress of the grant review process.

Voicemail/E-mail

BCRP is checking into the possibility of getting voicemail for all Council members to allow mass

messages to be sent to Council members. One option identified would allow group messages. However, the system lacks an “alert” signal that would let Council member know he or she has voicemail. Instead, this system requires the user to call in and check if there are any messages waiting to be picked up. Another drawback is that, unlike fax or E-mail, this system does not allow the transmission of documents or visual images.

Electronic mail via computer and modem (E-mail) seems preferable to relying on a fax machine. Currently, several Council members and all staff have access to E-mail. The Program will be evaluating the cost of providing E-mail to the remaining members.

Amendment and Approval of Minutes of the February 6, 1995 Council Meeting

The minutes of the February 6 meeting were reviewed. It was agreed that the minutes be amended to include on page 2, paragraph 7, that while Edith Perez and Barry Hirschowitz were both stepping down from their roles as Council members, Barry Hirschowitz had previously asked that he not be recognized as such during the Council meeting.

It was suggested that Jacquolyn Duerr, listed as an attending member of the public in the minutes, be instead listed as alternate ex officio member, to recognize her status as a stand in for Council member Liana Lianov.

A question was asked regarding the section on Liana Lianov’s presentation on the recommendation from the California Department of Health Services’ Breast and Cervical Cancer Advisory Council (BCCAC) to BCRP that BCRP focus on underserved populations. The BCCAC subsequently sent a letter to the

Program recommending the Program focus on underserved and *understudied* populations (i.e., younger women).

Presentation of Council's Consensus on the Report of the Evaluation and Oversight Subcommittee

Councilwoman Shinagawa presented the findings of the Evaluation and Oversight Subcommittee in two parts, the first addressing specific allegations of misconduct on the part of the staff during the Letters of Intent (LOI) review process, and the second consisting of recommendations for improving the grant application review process in future funding cycles.

Allegations of misconduct

The allegations were investigated through extensive interviews with staff, study section chairs, and the lengthy rereview of rejected LOIs. The Subcommittee found absolutely no evidence of any misconduct and declared all allegations to be strictly hearsay, and declared the matter closed.

The Council presented recommendations for disseminating the subcommittee findings. The subcommittee will be sending a letter to all staff, review committee members, and to individuals alleging misconduct outlining their findings. A detailed report will be forthcoming.

The Council recommended that the Program send letters to the non-invitees encouraging them to apply for awards in the next funding cycle.

The Council further recommended that in future funding cycles LOIs be requested for informational purposes only, and should not be required. The LOIs will serve to alert the Program to under solicited

research areas and will aid in the formation of application study sections.

Finally, the Council recommended proceeding with the review of Cycle 1 applications as scheduled.

Council Chair and subcommittee member Susan Claymon expressed appreciation to the staff for their cooperation during the investigation.

Recommendations for improving the application process

Councilwoman Shinagawa presented recommendations for future grant application processing. The Subcommittee will be presenting a revised copy of the report and recommendations to the Program.

Dr. Hopper expressed his appreciation to Council chair Susan Claymon and subcommittee chair Susan Shinagawa for their thorough investigation and for their thoughtful and comprehensive recommendations. He stressed the positive aspect that this in-depth review will help to improve the application process and will aid in planning for future funding cycles.

Dr. Gruder recommended caution in sending letters to non-invitees encouraging them to apply in the next cycle to make sure that they are not given an unfair advantage (such as early notification of application deadlines) over other applicants.

A suggestion was made that the Program hold a voluntary “relevance” review so that applicants can get feedback on their research topic prior to applying for funding. The definition of “relevance” will need to be more clearly defined before this can take place.

Dr. Gruder thanked the Council for the recommendations, and said that the Program staff would need to read the subcommittee report and get back to the Council at a later date with ideas on how to implement the recommendations.

Analysis of Legislation

Leah Cartabrano distributed copies of a letter to Senator Watson from legislative council which analyzes the legislation funding BCRP and which states that the funds to be awarded must be encumbered by June 30, 1995.

Discussion of Process to Arrive at Funding Decisions

Dr. Gruder and the Program staff previewed the process the Council will use at the June Council meeting to arrive at the final funding recommendations for Cycle 1. The Council will use the process that the Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program Scientific Advisory Committee developed as a model. Council members will receive the study section rosters, abstracts from the applications, and a list of grant applications submitted (including the primary investigator's name, institution, project title and approved cost) organized by award type and scientific merit score. The Council, in addition to deciding which projects will be funded, will need to create a contingency list of projects to be funded if for some reason an investigator refuses his award. The next Council meeting will be held on the evening of June 5 and all day on June 6, at the Waterfront Hotel in Oakland.

Other Business

Appointment of new Council members

Nominations for new Council members are still being accepted. Nominations were solicited for 3 of the

4 openings. The Council would like to fill the seats vacated by Barry Hirschowitz and Edith Perez as soon as possible. Council Chair Susan Claymon distributed a letter from Robert Erwin of Biosource Technologies seeking a position on the Council as an industry representative. Chair Claymon also distributed a letter to the Council strongly endorsing this candidate.

Closing remarks

Dr. Gruder once again thanked the Council and subcommittee for their efforts. A suggestion was made to send the Evaluation and Oversight subcommittee report to all breast cancer advocacy groups in California to help maintain a proactive stance and to facilitate public relations. The Council requested that it be allowed to review the form letter which will be mailed to applicants who are not awarded funding by the Program. A suggestion was made to create a subcommittee to review all form letters that are sent out by the Program.

ADJOURNMENT 3:40 P.M.