

## **RFA: Pilot and Exploratory Projects in Palliative Care of Cancer Patients and Their Families**

Annual Deadline: October 15th

**PURPOSE:** The development of the specialty of palliative medicine has been a critical step in addressing the unmet needs of patients with serious illness and their families and the growth of this field has been remarkable. Nevertheless, the field faces sizeable challenges if care for seriously ill patients and their families is to improve. Unlike other areas of medicine, the knowledge base to support the basic elements of palliative care clinical practice (i.e., pain and symptom management, communication skills, care coordination) is small and inadequate and systems of care that have been developed to support the needs of patients and families have yet to be evaluated. Over the past eight years, a series of reports from the Institute of Medicine, the National Institutes of Health, and the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine have called for substantial investment in palliative care research to address these knowledge gaps, but despite billions of dollars spent on research in cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), Alzheimer's and related dementias, and cancer, there has been almost no investment in research that might significantly alleviate the physical symptoms; psychological distress; and personal care, family, and social needs of older persons living with advanced illness.

One of the major contributing factors to low levels of research support for care of people with serious and complex illnesses is that there is no federal agency specifically charged with that mission. With few exceptions, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are disease-specific and thus palliative care with its applicability to all serious illnesses does not fit well within one particular institute. The National Cancer Institute (NCI), the National Institute on Aging (NIA), the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) have supported some research in palliative care but it is not a priority in any of these agencies' annual budgets.

Pilot data results are typically needed before a federal agency (e.g., NIH, VA) or the American Cancer Society will consider funding a research project. In an effort to support clinician investigators conducting patient-oriented research in palliative care who wish to maximize their chances of larger extramural funding, the American Cancer Society, in parallel with the National Palliative Care Research Center (NPCRC), is soliciting applications for pilot/exploratory research grants in palliative care of cancer patients and their families.

**FOCUS of RFA:** This RFA provides funding for investigators performing pilot and exploratory research studies whose purpose is to test interventions, develop research methodologies, and explore novel areas of research in palliative care of cancer patients and their families. A condition of funding is a clearly defined plan as to how the investigator will use the results of the project to develop larger, extramurally funded research projects.

This RFA is **limited** to applications that focus on palliative care research projects for seriously ill cancer patients and their families in three specific areas:

1. Exploring the relationship of pain and other distressing symptoms on quality and quantity of life, independence, function, and disability and developing interventions directed at their treatment in patients with advanced and chronic illnesses;
2. Studying methods of improving communication between adults living with serious illness, their families and their health care providers;
3. Evaluating models and systems of care for patients living with advanced illness and their families.

As a condition of accepting the award, each recipient of this grant, will agree to:

1. Attend the required meetings of the NPCRC in Fall during the award period.
2. Present results of the funded research at this required NPCRC meeting;
3. Prepare annual progress reports for each year of funding and a final report at the conclusion of the award period.
4. List the American Cancer Society as funding this study on all publications and presentations.

#### **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

1. Applications may be submitted by not-for-profit institutions located within the United States, its territories and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.
2. Applicants must be United States citizens, non-citizen nationals or permanent residents of the United States.
3. Applicants must hold a doctorate degree (MD, PhD, or equivalent) and have a full-time faculty position or equivalent at a college, university, medical school, or other fiscally responsible not-for-profit organization within the United States. Independent investigators at all stages of their career are eligible to apply. Thus, the usual ACS restriction to investigators within the first six years of their initial independent research appointment does not apply to this RFA.

#### **MECHANISM OF SUPPORT:**

**Mechanism:** This RFA will use the American Cancer Society Pilot and Exploratory Projects (PEP) award mechanism. Complete instructions on this grant mechanism can be found at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org). Choose “Explore Research” > “Research Program and Funding” > “Funding Opportunities” > “Index of Grants” > “New Initiatives and Request for Applications”.

**Length of Study:** Awards may not exceed a period of one to two years duration.

**Budget:** Awards may not exceed \$60,000 per year (direct costs) plus 20% indirect costs. Salary support for the Principal Investigator may not exceed 20% of the direct costs.

**Awards:** It is anticipated that a total of \$500,000 per year for five years (starting in 2006) will be available for applications selected through the Society's peer review system.

**DEADLINE:** Applicants must submit their full application electronically and in paper format per guidelines on cancer.org no later than 5pm (Eastern) on October 15th.

#### **PEER REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS**

Review of applications at the American Cancer Society is a two-tiered process:

Step 1: Applications will first be reviewed by the Palliative Care Research committees.

Applications considered for funding will be recommended to the Council for Extramural Grants

Research.

Step 2: Applications considered for funding will be reviewed by the Council for Extramural Grants. After considering the relative merit of the applications, the available funds and the Society's objectives, the Council will determine who will be funded.

### **ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS**

Due to the high number of expected applications, please contact our office only if the answer is not clearly stated in the guidelines here or online at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) Please contact Dr. Ronit Elk by email only: [ronit.elk@cancer.org](mailto:ronit.elk@cancer.org)

### **KEY DATES:**

Proposal Deadline: October 15

Applications Reviewed in Committee: January

Preliminary Notification of Outcome: March

Applications Reviewed in Council: March

Notifications of Awards: April

Award Start Date: July 1

The website for the National Palliative Care Research Center is: [www.npcrc.org](http://www.npcrc.org)