

2020

\$150 Million for the Department of Defense (DOD) Breast Cancer Research Program (BCRP) for FY2020

Background

The DOD BCRP was created in 1992 as a result of the National Breast Cancer Coalition’s “\$300 Million More” campaign to increase federal funding for breast cancer research. Due to NBCC’s efforts and the Congressional leadership of Senators Tom Harkin (D-IA) and Alfonse D’Amato (R-NY) in FY1993 Congress appropriated \$210 million in the DOD research and development budget for a breast cancer peer reviewed research program administered by the Department of the Army. As a result of NBCC’s grassroots advocacy and the DOD BCRP’s demonstrated success, Congress has appropriated funding for it each year since.

A Model Medical Research Program

Since its inception, the DOD BCRP has sought to “eradicate breast cancer by funding innovative, high-impact research through a partnership of scientists and consumers.” It has grown from a small research program to a far-reaching, influential model that others throughout the cancer and broader medical research community have sought to replicate. Some of the keys to the DOD BCRP’s success are:

- **It is innovative and unique.** The DOD BCRP has a unique grants structure that allows it to be more flexible than other traditional competitive, peer-reviewed medical research programs. Due to this structure, it is able to fund innovative, high-risk, high-return research and quickly respond to current scientific advances. In addition, the DOD BCRP is able to fill gaps by focusing on areas of research that are promising but otherwise underfunded. In its reviews of the DOD BCRP, the Institute of Medicine has stated, “the program fills a unique niche among public and private funding sources for cancer research. It is not duplicative of other programs and is a promising vehicle for forging new ideas and scientific breakthroughs in the nation’s fight against breast cancer.”
- **It is efficient.** Due to the program’s flexibility, the Army is able to administer it with unparalleled efficiency and little bureaucracy. This allows approximately 90% of the appropriated funding to go directly to competitive, peer-reviewed research grants awarded to the best science.
- **It is accountable to the public and transparent.** Educated, trained consumer advocates participate in a two-tiered process where research proposals are reviewed first for scientific quality, and then for programmatic relevance. This consumer involvement allows for grant funding decisions to be informed by trained breast cancer survivors and based on the concerns and needs of both the patient and medical communities. It allows

for the perspective of those who have no agenda other than to end breast cancer for everyone. Each researcher must present their results online on the program's website. This transparency allows scientists, consumers and the public to view the progress made in breast cancer research through the DOD BCRP.

- **It has produced extraordinary results.** From new methods of extracting breast cancer cells at their earliest stages, to unprecedeted research into gene/environment interaction, to quality of life issues, the DOD BCRP leads the way in generating new approaches to breast cancer prevention and treatment. It has produced fascinating insights into the biology of breast cancer and has directly impacted lives through the research it has funded, such as the revolutionary work that led to the development of the innovative drug Herceptin.

The DOD BCRP also owes its success to the integrated efforts of all of its partners – from the ongoing dedication of the US Army and their belief and support of this mission, to the Members of Congress who support the program through continued funding, to the scientists and consumers who participate, and to the researchers who every year submit proposals that reach the highest level asked of them by the program.

A Continued and Growing Need

Despite the success the DOD BCRP has had, breast cancer remains an incredibly complex disease. We still do not know how to prevent it, how to diagnose it and make a real difference or how to end it. In the United States, the chance of a woman developing breast cancer during her lifetime has increased from 1 in 11 in 1975 to 1 in 8 today. U.S. breast cancer mortality has been declining but only slightly.

In addition, continuing the progress the DOD BCRP has made towards breast cancer prevention and treatment is vital not only to save lives, but also to address important economic and health care cost issues. The National Cancer Institute estimates that breast cancer care in the United States cost \$16.5 billion in 2010. It estimates if the status quo continues, this care will cost over \$20.5 billion by 2020.

Action Requested

NBCC asks Senators and Representatives to urge the Defense Appropriations Subcommittees to include funding of \$150 million in the Department of Defense (DOD) Appropriations bill to fund the DOD peer reviewed Breast Cancer Research Program for FY2020.