



Medical research is threatened

By Robert W. Rubin / President and CEO, Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute on Wed, Jun 27, 2012

The outlook for medical research in New Mexico and the enormous potential it holds in combating respiratory disease is bleak. Congressional action to reduce the deficit could result in significant cuts in federal funding for local research institutions.

Medical research is a down-payment on a better future; it shouldn't fall victim to severe budget cuts that will inevitably slow progress and delay the discoveries that are needed for improving health care and developing new treatments for patients. We're on the cusp of solving many medical mysteries, yet those studies are at risk in this tight fiscal climate.

Research is also a powerful economic engine supporting the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry and startups in the development of new therapies and preventive measures. In New Mexico, the National Institutes of Health provided more than \$105 million for research in fiscal 2011. These funds supported thousands of high-paying direct and indirect jobs in New Mexico.

Historically, research has boosted the local economy and produced medical breakthroughs that saved countless lives. A robust funding stream is necessary to combat lung cancer and other respiratory diseases here in New Mexico. Some of the most significant research at Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute is in the lung cancer program. Lovelace Respiratory Research Institute scientists focus on using the basic laboratory setting to identify critical determinants that regulate genes and pathways whose function may prove valuable as biomarkers for early detection, for monitoring disease recurrence and as targets for therapy. Key to reducing mortality from lung cancer will require early detection, more effective therapeutic approaches and the development of primary and secondary prevention.

Federal support is critical to solving such medical challenges. Yet research can be overlooked in election season. To address this issue, Research! America, a nonprofit advocacy group, is asking candidates to articulate their views on medical research issues. Do our elected officials and candidates think the federal government should place more emphasis on increasing the number of young Americans who pursue careers in science, technology, engineering or mathematics? Will they maintain America's global competitive edge in science, technology and innovation and make it a high priority?

Every constituent deserves to know where candidates stand on research to improve health and save lives, as this is a defining issue for ours and generations to come. We have all benefited from investments in health research through vaccines, drugs, devices and public health and prevention strategies. If we want to promote healthier lives, we must ensure that research remains a priority. We encourage New Mexico's congressional candidates to recognize the importance of health research. Our health and our economic prosperity depend on it.