

# NORTH DAKOTA RESIDENTS SPEAK OUT ON RESEARCH

*A Public Opinion Study for Research!America*

2002

*Research!America has been gauging public opinion on people's attitudes toward medical, health and scientific research since 1992. Results of the recent poll in North Dakota show a high level of support and value for research considered in both the public and private sector. These poll responses indicate there is an overwhelming belief in North Dakota that research is important and is a high priority for its citizens, particularly as it impacts the state's health, education and economy.*

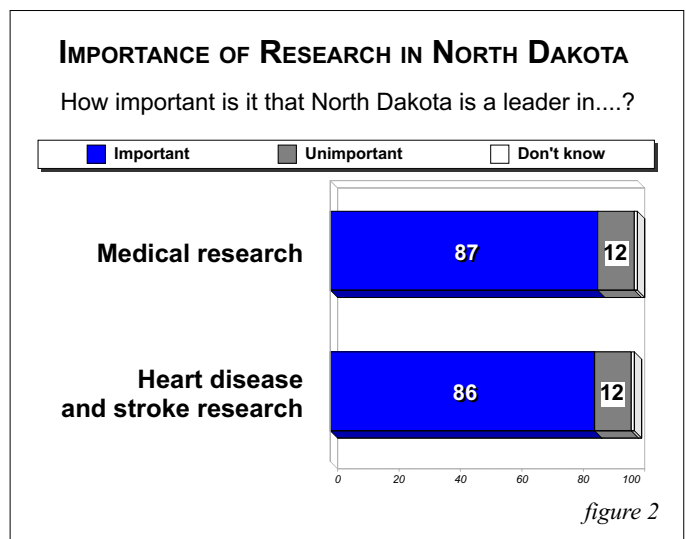
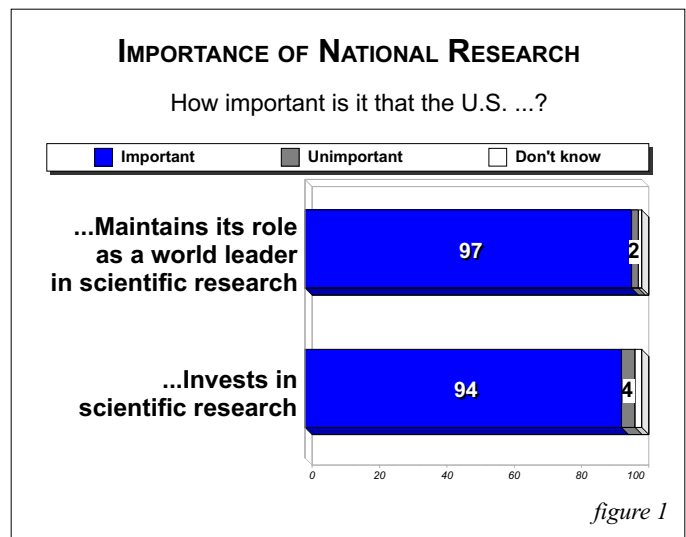
## LEADERSHIP IN RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT TO NORTH DAKOTA RESIDENTS

Research is clearly important to North Dakota residents (see figure 1). In fact, 97% of North Dakota residents say it is important that the United States maintains its role as a world leader in scientific research, with 78% saying this is *very important*.

Similarly, 94% of North Dakota residents agree it is important for the US to invest in scientific research in areas such as physics, mathematics, and engineering, and over two thirds feel it is *very important* for the US to invest in this type of research (see figure 2). Furthermore, over three-quarters agree that even if it brings no immediate benefits, basic research which advances the frontiers of knowledge is necessary and should be supported by the federal government.

Eighty-seven percent of residents say it is important for North Dakota to be a leader in medical research, and 47% say it is *very important*. However, only 20% say North Dakota is currently very much a leader. Forty percent say the state is somewhat a leader, and 31% believe North Dakota is not a leader.

A large majority of residents feel it is important for North Dakota to be a leader in heart disease and stroke research. Eighty-six percent believe North Dakota's leadership in heart disease and stroke research is important (50% *very important*).



## MEDICAL RESEARCH IS IMPORTANT TO NORTH DAKOTA'S ECONOMY

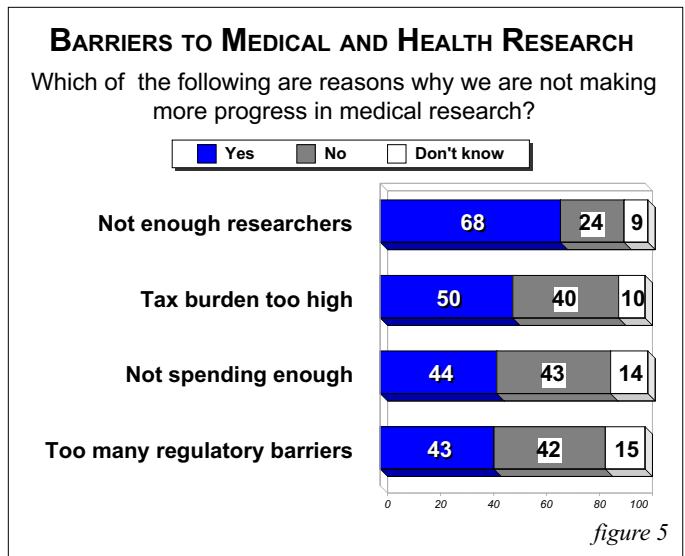
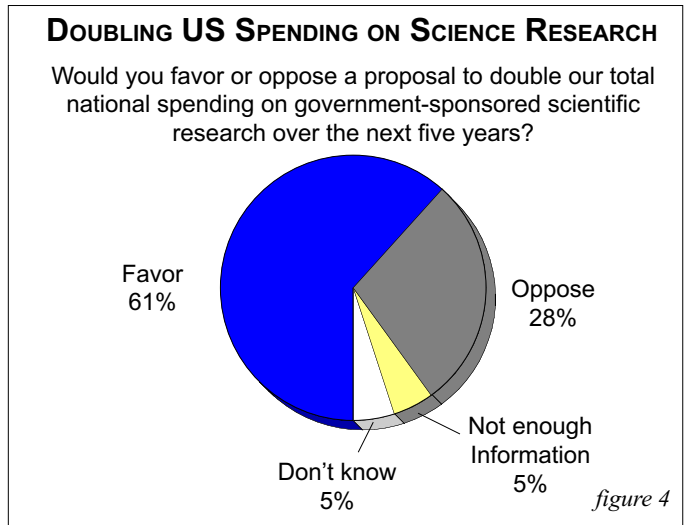
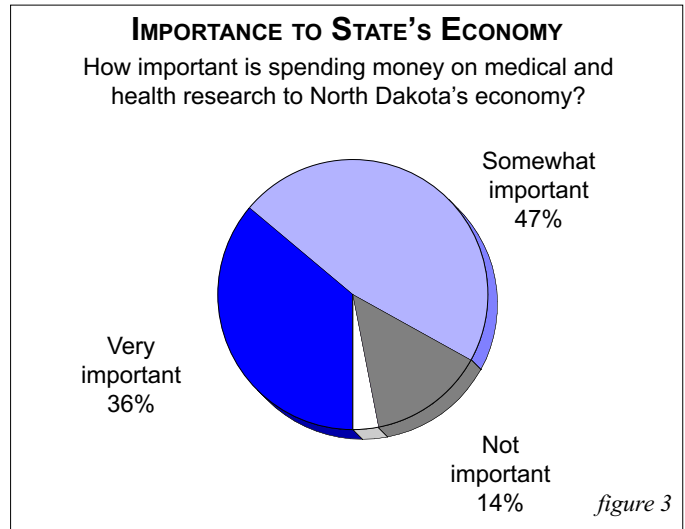
Thinking in terms of jobs, incomes, and quality of life, four-in-five North Dakota residents feel that spending money on medical and health research is important to the state's economy. One-third feel spending on medical and health research is *very important* to North Dakota's economy, and another 47% feel it is somewhat important (see Figure 3).

## RESIDENTS FAVOR ENHANCED SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR RESEARCH

Residents strongly support the state offering financial incentives to attract new scientific research. In fact, 44% strongly approve of such incentives and an additional 37% somewhat approve. Furthermore, 61% of residents favor a proposal to double total national spending on government-sponsored scientific research over the next five years (see figure 4).

Additionally, 44% feel that too little funding is a barrier to medical and health research in the nation, and 43% of residents believe that an excess of regulations is a major barrier to medical and health research (see figure 5). Fifty percent agree that the research and development tax burden is a barrier to progress in medical research. Nearly three-quarters agree that Congress should support tax and regulatory policies that encourage private industries to conduct more medical research.

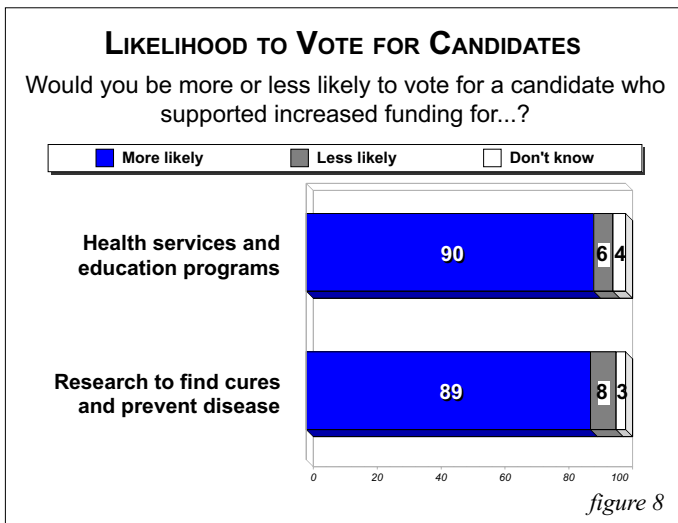
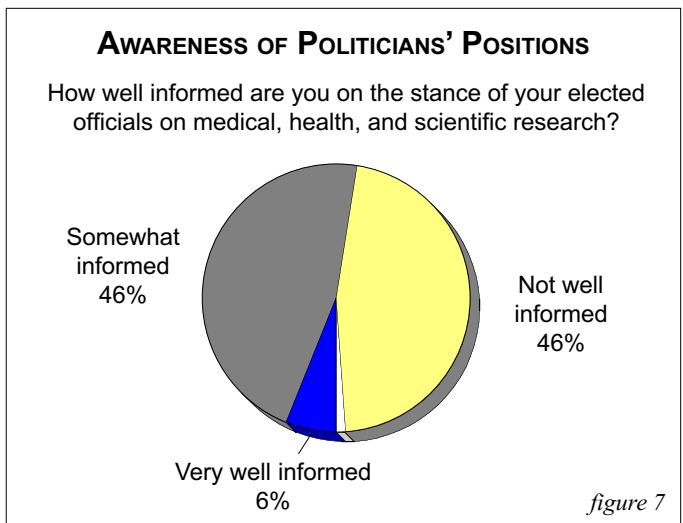
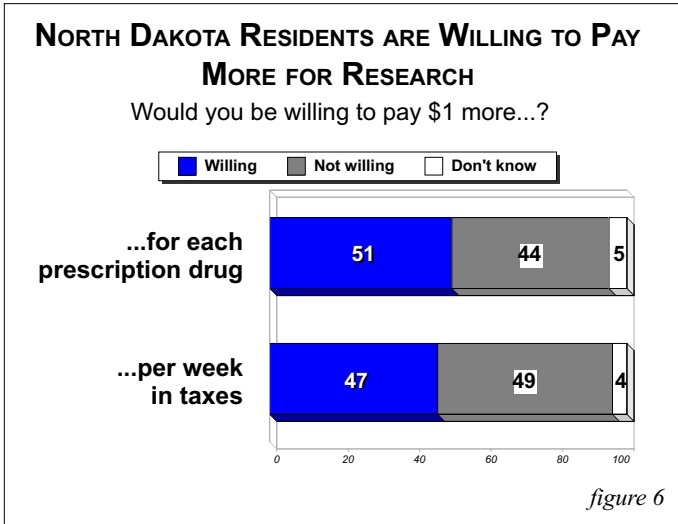
A plurality of 39% of North Dakota residents believe we should be spending more than the current five to six cents per US health care dollar on medical and health research (see Figure 6, next page). Twenty-nine say this is the right amount and only 6% say we should be spending less. Also, 72% say we should be spending more than the current one cent per US health care dollar on prevention research. Only 12% agree we are spending the right amount.



Not only do residents approve of more government spending on research, they are also willing to pay more for it. Fifty-one percent would be willing to pay \$1 more for each prescription drug if the money would be spent on additional medical research. Forty-seven percent say they would be willing to pay \$1 more per week in taxes for more health research.

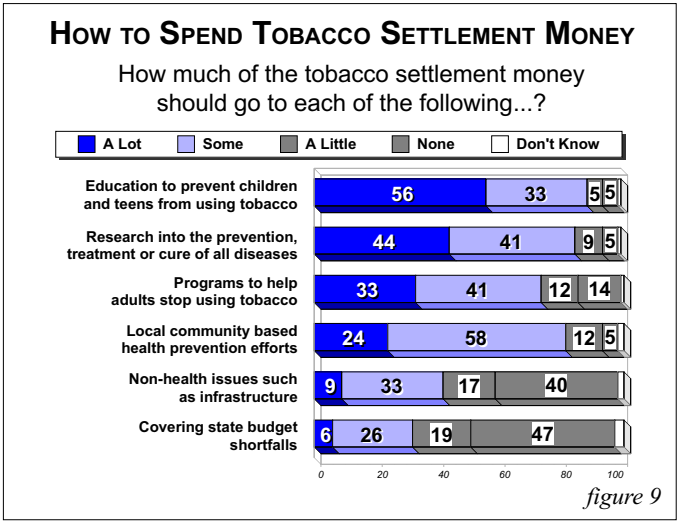
### RESIDENTS FAVOR ELECTED OFFICIALS WHO SUPPORT RESEARCH

Although North Dakota residents favor increased spending on research, 46% say they are not well informed about the stance of their elected officials when it comes to their support of medical, health and scientific research (see figure 7). However, 90% say they would be more likely to vote for candidates who support increased funding for health services and education programs, with 45% saying they would be *much more likely* to support them. Similarly, 89% would be more likely to vote for candidates who support increased funding for research to find cures for and prevent diseases, with 46% saying they would be *much more likely* to support them (see figure 8).



### TOBACCO SETTLEMENT MONEY SHOULD BE SPENT ON MEDICAL RESEARCH AND HEALTH EDUCATION

When asked how North Dakota should spend the settlement money it will receive from various tobacco companies, 85% feel it should be spent on research into the prevention, treatment or cure of disease (see figure 9). More specifically, 44% of residents feel the North Dakota government should spend *a lot of money* on research. Eighty-nine percent feel the state should spend money on health education to prevent children and teens from smoking, with 56% saying the state should spend *a lot of money*. Eighty-two percent support spending the



money on local community based health prevention efforts, and nearly three-quarters (74%) support spending the settlement funds on programs to help smokers quit.

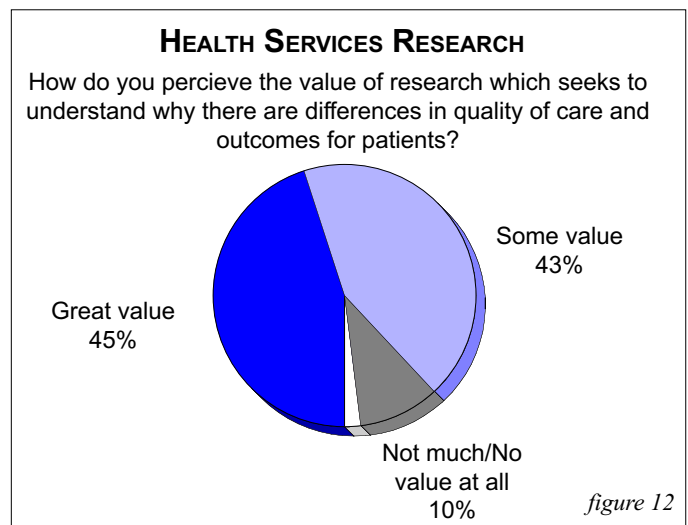
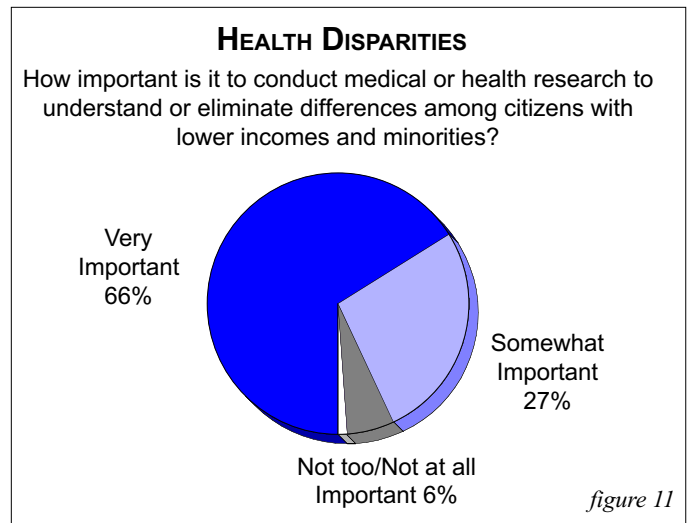
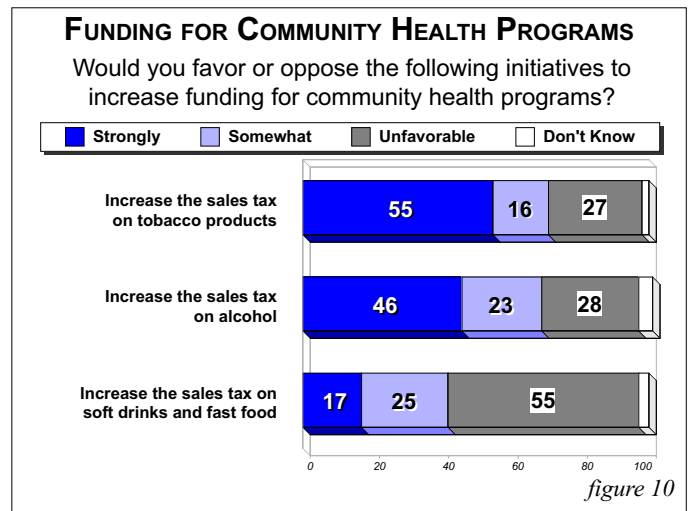
### RESIDENTS SUPPORT PROPOSALS TO INCREASE FUNDING FOR HEALTH PROMOTION AND DISEASE PREVENTION RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMS

Residents favor several proposals to increase funding for health promotion and disease prevention research. Seventy-one percent would favor an initiative to create a state tax return check-off for voluntary donations to health research. Sixty-nine percent would favor an initiative that would increase the sales tax on tobacco products, and 68% would favor an increase of sales tax on alcohol. Residents are less favorable toward increasing the sales tax on fast food and soft drinks, with 40% favoring and 58% opposing such a measure.

Residents are even more favorable toward similar measures that would be designed to increase funding for community health programs (see Figure 10). Seventy-one percent would favor increasing the sales tax on tobacco products to fund these programs, and 69% of North Dakota residents would favor increasing the sales tax on alcohol to increase funding community health programs. Residents remain hesitant to increase sales taxes on soft drinks and fast food, with 42% favoring and 55% opposing the increase.

### NORTH DAKOTA RESIDENTS PLACE A HIGH VALUE ON RESEARCH TO ELIMINATE HEALTH DISPARITIES

North Dakota residents believe it is important to research diseases that disproportionately affect low income and minority citizens. Ninety-three percent say it is important to conduct research to end these differences. Specifically, two-thirds feel this is *very important* and 27% feel it is somewhat important (see figure 11). Additionally, 88% of North Dakota residents support research that seeks to understand why there are differences in quality of care and outcomes for patients. In fact, 45% believe this research to be *very valuable* (see figure 12).



## PHYSICIANS, VOLUNTARY HEALTH AGENCIES, AND TEACHING HOSPITALS ARE MOST TRUSTWORTHY SOURCES OF INFORMATION ON MEDICAL AND HEALTH RESEARCH

Residents consider health care providers to be the most trustworthy sources of information about medical and health research, with 95% saying nurses are very or somewhat credible, and 93% saying their physicians and pharmacists are credible. Medical schools and teaching hospitals, dentists, and voluntary health agencies such as the American Heart Association, are also highly credible, with 88% to 91% considering each of these sources very or somewhat credible. Media sources and pharmaceutical companies are considered credible by 65% and 62% respectively, but the percentage who find these organizations *very trustworthy* is significantly lower (9% and 12% respectively). HMOs and the Internet are considered the least credible sources of health information overall (58% and 57%), with only 8% and 9% finding them *very trustworthy* (see figure 13).

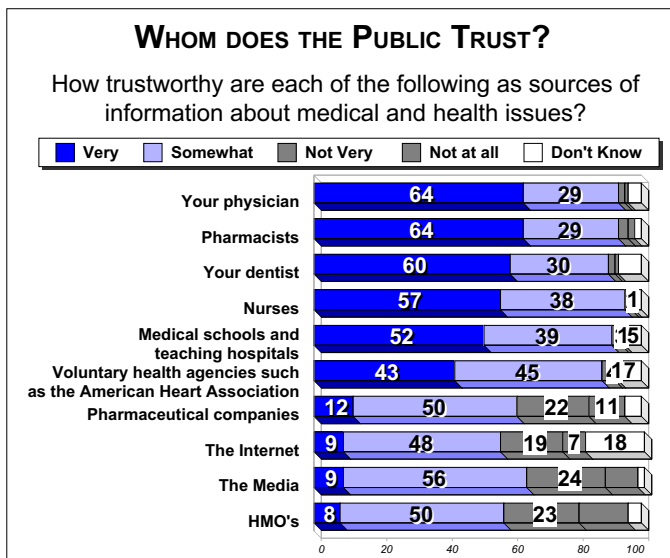


figure 13

## NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH, NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION, AND CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION HAVE LOW PUBLIC RECOGNITION

Despite their willingness to support medical, health, science and engineering research efforts, North Dakota residents generally do not know what agencies are responsible for spending their tax dollars on that research. Three-quarters say they cannot name the government agency that funds most of the medical research paid for by taxpayers, and only two percent correctly identified the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Similarly, 84% say they cannot identify the government agency that funds most of the basic research and educational programming in the sciences, mathematics and engineering in this country. Only two percent correctly identified the National Science Foundation (NSF). Finally, while 63% say they do not know the name of the agency whose primary mission is disease prevention and health promotion, 22% correctly identified the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (see figure 14).

In contrast, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) garners a high level of public recognition, with 63% correctly identifying the government agency which conducts the review and approval of new drugs and devices before they can be put on the market.

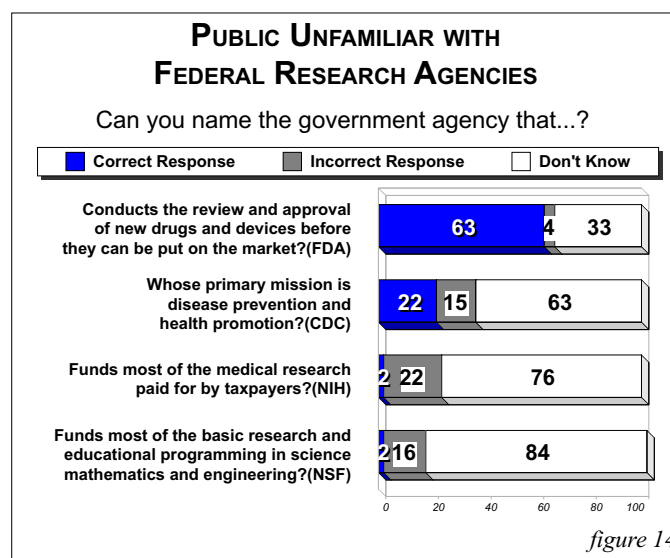


figure 14

## ALSO OF NOTE...

Fifty-eight percent of North Dakota residents are unable to name an organization in the state where medical research is conducted. Of those mentioned, University of North Dakota tops the list with 16%, followed by North Dakota State University (4%). All other organizations named were cited by fewer than 4%. Similarly, 58% are unable to name an institution in the US where medical and health research is conducted. While residents mention a wide range of organizations across the nation where research is conducted, none receives more than 10% of mentions. The Mayo Clinic tops the list with 8%, followed by Johns Hopkins University at 4%.

Asked what concerns residents have about medical research, a plurality of one-third cite no concerns. Of those who mentioned a concern, finding a cure for cancer was the most frequently cited (10%), while 8% mentioned the need for more research. Another five percent mentioned concerns that research is profit-driven. All other concerns were cited by fewer than five percent.

Cloning was mentioned as a concern by only 3% of residents. When given more information about types of cloning, residents express support for research into therapeutic cloning (used to help in the search for possible cures and treatments for diseases and disabilities). Sixty-one percent agree that research into therapeutic cloning should go forward, while one-third feel that it should not be allowed. More than four-in-five residents say research into reproductive cloning should not be allowed to go forward, with 76% who feel *strongly* that it should not be allowed. North Dakota residents believe the use of animals in medical research is necessary for progress in medicine. Four-in-five residents feel this way, with 53% strongly and 26% somewhat.

## METHODOLOGY

*Charlton Research Company conducted a telephone survey among 800 adults in North Dakota. The entire sample was proportionate to the state's demographics, including geography, gender, voter registration and ethnicity. The survey, fielded August 9-18, 2001, has a theoretical sampling error of +/-3.5%. Please note that much of the question text in this report has been paraphrased.*

*This poll was commissioned by Research!America, a non-profit, membership-supported national alliance of groups and individuals dedicated to enhancing public education and advocacy for medical, health, and scientific research. For more information about the North Dakota poll, including a list of sponsoring organizations, or for other questions about public attitudes towards scientific research, contact Research!America at: 1101 King Street, Suite 520, Alexandria, Virginia 22314 · Telephone: 703/739-2577 · Fax: 703/739-2372 · e-mail: [info@researchamerica.org](mailto:info@researchamerica.org) · [www.researchamerica.org](http://www.researchamerica.org).*

