

Dear colleagues,

As the directors of the Bloomington Drosophila Stock Center, the national repository for strains of *Drosophila melanogaster*, we appreciate this opportunity to comment on the proposed redistribution of NCRD Division of Comparative Medicine activities to other NIH entities. In particular, we would like to address the plans to place oversight of non-primate model organism resources within NIGMS.

Although we regret the loss of an NIH institute dedicated to research resources, we support the "straw model" plan to relocate the program for non-primate animal models from NCRD to NIGMS. NIGMS is the logical home for this essential activity, because both NIGMS and model organism resource centers support the full breadth of biomedical research—from investigations of fundamental biological processes to disease treatments. Because NCATS will focus primarily on advancing the development of new therapeutics, its mission will not encompass many resource center activities and it should not be expected to evaluate and oversee them. The resource centers strongly promote translational research and the development and use of animal models of human disease, but support of basic research is, and should continue to be, a central part of their mission. Translational research is possible only because a strong foundation of fundamental biological knowledge has been developed through basic research. It is appropriate that the administrative structure of NIH reflects this reality with respect to the oversight of non-primate model organism resources.

There are strong synergisms between research supported by NIGMS and the interests of model organism research communities. As the primary funder of basic biomedical research in the U.S., NIGMS has steadfastly supported investigation in fields that underpin translational research such as biochemistry, molecular biology, genetics, developmental biology, physiology, pharmacology, neurobiology and behavior. NIGMS has nurtured the development of model organism systems such as *Drosophila*, *C. elegans*, *Tetrahymena*, zebrafish and mice, and it has been key to the development of biochemical, immunological, cytological, genetic and genomic techniques and tools that have made model organisms essential to contemporary biomedical research. NIGMS sponsorship of large-scale infrastructure projects for *Drosophila* has been instrumental in improving its utility. These activities assure us that NIGMS is committed to the well-being of model organism research. Furthermore, NIGMS has cooperated with NCRD in the support of non-primate resource centers and this experience will be helpful in assimilating the infrastructure activities of the Division of Comparative Medicine.

The management of resource centers is a specialized activity and NCRD has instituted practices that accommodate their exceptional characteristics. As oversight of resource centers moves to another institute, it will be important to retain administrative innovations developed within NCRD for these unique needs. In particular, it will be important to review resource center funding applications by different criteria than hypothesis-driven research. Resource centers must be judged by the value and quality of service they provide the research community and the degree to which they propel research by making new experimental resources available to all investigators.

Finally, it is critical that transition plans recognize that the current Division of Comparative Medicine staff has a wealth of experience and practical knowledge about animal resources from years of

overseeing national centers. We interact regularly with DCM scientists and we appreciate how well they understand the intricacies of our operation and how dedicated they are to good stewardship of research resources. They are unsung heroes in the continued success and vigor of model organism research and its application to translational science. We feel strongly that retaining their expertise and "institutional memory" is the most important factor ensuring the ongoing success of current programs.

Respectfully yours,

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