Harold Varmus, M.D.
Director
National Cancer Institute
National Institutes of Health
BG 9609 MSC 9760
9609 Medical Center Drive
Bethesda, MD 20892-9760

Dear Dr. Varmus:

We are concerned about the state of gastric cancer research in the United States and respectfully request your commitment to improve gastric cancer's profile at the National Cancer Institute (NCI).

Deadly gastric cancer is on the rise in young people. In May of 2010, the NCI reported that the likelihood of being diagnosed with gastric cancer at age 25-39 years has increased by almost 70 percent since 1977. The consequences of such a diagnosis are catastrophic for a young person. Because there are minimal symptoms of gastric cancer, it is most often diagnosed at late stage when curative treatment is impossible.

The NCI's incidence study sends an early warning signal, and it therefore presents an opportunity to stem this concerning trend by dedicating more research resources to understanding this deadly cancer - making molecular screening, early diagnosis, treatments and cures a possibility for the future. According to the NCI's FY 2012 funding data, when compared to the most common cancers, stomach cancer receives the least funding per cancer death ($1,102).

The American Cancer Society (ACS) estimates 21,600 new cases of gastric cancer will be diagnosed in 2013, and 10,990 men and women will die from the disease within the year. According to the NCI, about 80 percent of people with stomach cancer are diagnosed with advanced metastatic cancer. At stage IV, the 5 year survival rate for gastric cancer is four percent. Even those few who beat the odds face a lifetime of cancer treatments to prevent the return of cancer.

We are pleased that gastric cancer has been selected for study under The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA). However, without efforts by the NCI to assist researchers in utilizing the genomic data from TCGA, the impact of TCGA on gastric cancer will be minimal. Very little foundational research data exists for gastric cancer; thus, gastric cancer researchers are greatly in need of federal assistance to ensure that promising gene candidates identified in TCGA research are able to be investigated to make progress in this field. We ask you to
make the utilization of TCGA data for gastric cancer research a priority and to carry this emphasis throughout the NCI’s cancer genomic efforts.


Sincerely,

PETER ROSKAM
Member of Congress

WASSERMAN SCHULTZ
Member of Congress

GUS BILIRAKIS
Member of Congress

CHERI BUSTOS
Member of Congress

VERN BUCHANAN
Member of Congress

CORRINE BROWN
Member of Congress

KATHY CASTOR
Member of Congress

DANNY DAVIS
Member of Congress

RODNEY DAVIS
Member of Congress

SUZAN DELBENE
Member of Congress

EL DEUTCH
Member of Congress

TAMMY DUCKWORTH
Member of Congress

WILLIAM ENYART
Member of Congress

BILL FOSTER
Member of Congress
AARON SCHOCK
Member of Congress

PETE SESSIONS
Member of Congress

JOHN SHIMKUS
Member of Congress

CHRIS SMITH
Member of Congress

FREDERICA WILSON
Member of Congress

TED YOHO
Member of Congress

PATRICK MURPHY
Member of Congress