

Letter to the Editor

Status of Research Funded by the American Diabetes Association—Year 4

In 1998, the American Diabetes Association (ADA) announced an ambitious Five Year Plan for funding for research, namely that by Fiscal Year 2003, one of every three Total Public Support dollars raised by the ADA would be allocated to Research Awards and Grants. Since 1998, I have kept the Professional Section apprised of progress toward that goal by yearly letters published in this journal. The results of the 4th year, Fiscal Year 2002, are included in Table 1.

The reason for keeping the Professional Section informed of progress (or lack thereof) toward the stated goal is past observations. I have been involved with the ADA since 1972, and in my experience, research funding goals are rarely reached. In the early 1980s, ~20% of funds were allocated to research. A goal of 100 million dollars for research was established, to be attained by the end of the decade. Throughout the decade, the proportion of monies given to research remained at ~20%, with absolute amounts increasing from 2.6 to 7.0 million dollars. Toward the end of the decade, the 100 million dollar goal by 1990 was revised, so that attaining it did not have to occur until 1993.

Apparently, the impossibility of reaching this goal was realized and the next research goal, stated in the early 1990s, was that “nearly 30%” of funds would be allocated to research. However, the commitment to research, which was 23% of Total Public Support in Fiscal Year 1988, declined to less than 11% in Fiscal Year 1992. The absolute amount in 1992 of 5.9 million dollars increased to 12.8 million dollars (or 14% of total public support) in 1997. The

TABLE 1
Total public support

Fiscal year	Total public support (millions of dollars)	Amount devoted to research (millions of dollars)	%
1998	90.8	15.5	17.1
Clock starts ticking			
1999	101.5	18.2	17.9
2000	117.8	22.4	19.0
2001	134.6	27.4	20.4
2002	146.3	31.7	21.7
2003	—	—	≥33.0?

situation in 1998 when the “one in three” dollars goal was stated is noted in Table 1.

It is obvious that we are not going to come close to “one in three” dollars of Total Public Support going to Research Awards and Grants by the end of the 5th year. There are two ways to consider this; the “half-empty or half-full glass” scenarios. I view this as a “half-empty glass” in that we make commitments that we can’t realistically meet. On the other hand, John Graham, the ADA’s Chief Executive Officer, views this as a “half-full glass.” He points out that without these very ambitious goals, we would not have come as far as we have.

That is the history and current situation regarding funding for Research Awards and Grants by the ADA. Professional Section members might want to weigh in concerning which approach they favor before the next Five Year Plan for research funding is decided.

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