



## MOVING THE SCIENCE FORWARD TOGETHER

Patricia A. Grady, PhD, RN, FAAN, Director, NINR, NIH

To paraphrase Newton, individual researchers are like people sorting pebbles on the beach of a vast ocean of undiscovered truth. I want to describe how NINR and the nursing community work together to look past the pebbles and explore that ocean.

NINR reaches out across the nation, specialties, and disciplines to assess the most pressing health care needs of people throughout the lifespan. Each year, NINR representatives attend 4 regional research society meetings to hear from scientists, educators, fellows, and students. The NINR National Advisory Council for Nursing Research (NACNR) meets regularly on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) campus to review NINR Strategic Plan progress and discuss research findings. In addition, the National Nursing Research Roundtable comes together once a year to discuss research resources and training, knowledge dissemination and utilization, health policy, and public affairs. All of these groups help identify gaps in the current knowledge base supporting patient care.

Along with this general assessment, NINR convenes working groups of scientists to explore potential areas of interest. A list of working groups conducted during the past 2 years includes the following:

- Research Opportunities in Cystic Fibrosis (May 2001)
- Research in Informal Caregiving (July 2001)
- End-of-Life Issues in Genetic Illnesses (September 2001)
- Integrative Workshop on End-of-Life Research: Focus on Older Populations (October 2001)
- Community-Partnered Interventions to Reduce Health Disparities (November 2001)
- Uniting Resources to Address Health Disparities (March 2002)
- Research Opportunities in Biodefense (May 2002)

These working groups review the current state of the science, looking for emerging areas of interest and gaps in the field of knowledge, along with strengths and areas of exper-

tise upon which to build. The goal of the working-group discussions is to recommend directions for new research. For example, the informal caregiving working group recommended increasing population-based research, investigating intergenerational caregiving, reaching underserved and minority populations, and maintaining the health and well-being of the caregiver. The 2 working groups for increasing research on health disparities recommended increasing the numbers of minority researchers, increasing community involvement, and improving strategies to include and retain minority subjects in clinical trials. The executive summaries of these meetings are available on our Web site at <http://www.nih.gov/ninr/news-info/meetings.html>.

Each January during the open council session, the NACNR reviews the NINR research programs and provides comments and recommendations to NINR about emerging areas of science. NINR acts on these recommendations to establish Areas of Research Opportunities for the coming year. These areas each may form the nucleus of a request for application (RFA) or a program announcement (PA) that targets a specific area of science. Responses to RFAs and PAs comprise roughly 30% of NINR grants, complementing the 70% of NINR grants devoted to investigator-initiated research projects. Investigator-initiated research, a long-honored approach to science at the NIH, relies on the inquisitiveness, experience, and expertise of the individual investigator to pursue specific areas of interest and is subjected to the peer review process.

The mission of NINR is to support and enhance the natural curiosity of scientists to benefit the health of the nation's populace. As Florence Nightingale said, "Were there none who were discontented with what they have, the world would never reach anything better." NINR uses the method of systematic and collaborative assessment previously described to frame research for the future. We look forward to your continued participation in this process. ■