

Research and Cost Reduction in Federal Health Programs

Virgil Simons

Founder and President, The Prostate Net

Research

In assessing the value of research, we should look at what our tax dollars are buying today, and we need to communicate as researchers in terms of what the research actually means to the patient. Redundancy has to be eliminated, and infrastructure must be built as well as intellectual capability with the research that we are doing.

Ultimately, we are looking from the standpoint of performance measurement. Are we really winning the war against prostate cancer? If we are winning the war, how do we know we are winning it, and how are we measuring it? Are we getting the “low hanging fruit” in terms of education, access and early detection funding to be able to stop a lot of the spread of the disease? Ultimately, we must look at comparative funding.

From an expectation standpoint, survivorship is key. What is being done to extend life? Are we looking enough at the patient as opposed to the system? Results need to be balanced with the acknowledgement that we are looking at a 15-year cycle. What can we do in the short-term that balances out that long-term goal that has some benefits in the short term? Finally, we must think globally and be able to utilize data and results from the rest of the world.

The factors that complicate the issue include the differences in women versus men, which include comparable incidence and mortality, research funds, public health staffing, government commitment, media focus and the issue of getting men to communicate.