



Comments of the Celiac Sprue Association

Opportunities and Challenges in Digestive Diseases Research: Recommendations of the National Commission on Digestive Diseases

The Celiac Sprue Association (CSA) applauds the National Commission on Digestive Diseases and the attention being given to digestive diseases. CSA supports the efforts and conclusions reflected in the draft recommendations Opportunities and Challenges in Digestive Disease Research. The trigger for celiac disease is known. The elimination of the offending grains from the patient's diet is the only disease treatment available at this time. The realistic and meaningful steps that NIH can take over the next decade will translate to substantial improvements in the quality of life for millions of people in the United States and around the world.

CSA strongly encourages efforts aimed at identifying environmental triggers for celiac disease as indicated on page 99, line 4636. This would raise awareness of celiac disease, increase diagnosis of the disease and provide pathways for lifestyle changes to reduce the prevalence of the disease.

CSA bolsters educational campaigns such as the NIH Celiac Disease Awareness Campaign (page 102, lines 4751–4756) for educating physicians and providing physician communication and coordination. The informed physician is prepared to make an accurate, timely diagnosis. Diagnosing at the primary care level reduces time, cost, and patient/doctor frustration resulting in better, safer, and more effective medicine.

CSA endorses clinical research for various reasons (page 148, lines 6962–6974) primarily "... for assuring a continuing pipeline of clinical investigators" Celiac disease is an autoimmune disease manifesting itself at any age by presenting any of the over 300 possible symptoms. Identifying new, noninvasive, simple, low cost diagnostic methods will speed the diagnosis thus significantly reducing the potential long-term effects (page 99, line 4637).

CSA champions the strategy and the reasons of the draft and suggests that research teams be encouraged to seek innovative approaches to investigating digestive disease problems.

February 15, 2008

Submitted by:

Mary Schlueter
Executive Director