

Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor
Wendi Patella
609-777-2600

RELEASE: February 24, 1999

Governor Whitman Creates Working Group to Improve Care for Cancer Patients

Gov. Christie Whitman today announced the formation of the Working Group to Improve Clinical Outcomes in Cancer Patients, a body that will work to get more New Jerseyans involved in clinical trials for cancer treatment.

"Cancer death rates have started to decline because of cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment. News like this is wonderful," Gov. Whitman said. "But here in New Jersey we still have a big fight on our hands."

Currently, only about two percent of cancer patients in New Jersey are enrolled in clinical trials, compared to three to five percent nationwide. According to studies, one obstacle in enrolling patients in clinical trials is the lack of insurance coverage.

The working group, which brings together the insurance and pharmaceutical companies, is charged with forming a consensus on reimbursement for clinical trials so that more New Jerseyans will participate.

"I am certain that it will open the doors to allow anyone who wants to participate in a clinical trial to do so. I am confident that it will also help reduce the incidence of cancer throughout our state," the Governor said. "And, I am hopeful that it will encourage the kind of research and clinical trials that will give all of us greater hope for a healthier, cancer-free future."

According to the American Cancer Society, about 40,000 New Jerseyans are expected be diagnosed with cancer in 1999. "Those of us who have seen friends and family members battle cancer know that's 40,000 too many," Governor Whitman said.

Under the auspices of the New Jersey Commission on Cancer Research, the group has representatives of the Cancer Institute of New Jersey, American Cancer Society, HMOs and other health plans, pharmaceutical companies, and patient advocates.

Gov. Whitman praised Assemblywomen Rose Heck and Charlotte Vandervalk who have been involved in the formation of the working group since holding legislative hearings on the issue last year.

The members of the working group have agreed to sign a Memorandum of Agreement which will guarantee insurance coverage for Phase III trials, the most developed drugs at the final stages of the drug research process. The group will continue its work to form a consensus for coverage of Phase I and Phase II trials.

