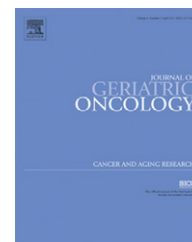


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Interventions to improve the quality of life and survivorship of older adults with cancer: The funding landscape at NIH, AGS and PCORI

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ABSTRACT

Identifying knowledge gaps and research opportunities in cancer and aging research was the focus of a three-part conference series led by the Cancer and Aging Research Group from 2010 to 2015. The third meeting, featured representatives from the NIA, NCI, ACS and PCORI each of whom discussed research priorities and funding opportunities in cancer and aging at their respective agencies. This manuscript reports on the proceedings of that conference with a specific focus on funding priorities for interventions to improve the quality of life and survivorship of older adults with cancer. Helpful tips from each funder regarding writing a scientifically strong research proposal are presented.

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1. Introduction

The Cancer and Aging Research Group (CARG) is dedicated to advancing the care of older adults with cancer through evidence-based practice. Identifying knowledge gaps and research opportunities to provide this evidence was the focus of a three-part conference series from 2010 to 2015 funded by the National Institute on Aging (NIA) through a U13 cooperative conference grant. The third meeting, held in collaboration with the NIA and the National Cancer Institute (NCI), featured representatives from the NIA, NCI, American Cancer Society (ACS) and the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) each of whom discussed research priorities and funding opportunities in cancer and aging at their respective agencies (see Table 1). In general, discussions targeted opportunities that focused on supportive care, symptom management, and the quality of survivorship in older and/or frail adults with cancer. The primary purpose of this manuscript is to provide an overview of the information presented to assist scholars involved in geriatric oncology research in developing new funding applications. Tips for successful grantmanship and common application pitfalls are also discussed. (See Tables 2 and 3.)

Table 1 – Websites for detailed information.

Websites for information	Home page	Funding home page
NCI	http://www.cancer.gov/	http://www.cancer.gov/grants-training
NIA	https://www.nia.nih.gov/	https://www.nia.nih.gov/research
PCORI	http://www.pcori.org/	http://www.pcori.org/funding-opportunities
ACS	http://www.cancer.org/index?_ga=1.142319415.403530104.1432132574	http://www.cancer.org/research/applyforaresearchgrant/index
CARG	http://www.mycarg.org/	http://www.mycarg.org/grant_opportunities

2. National Institutes of Health (NIH)

The NIH is an agency of the US Department of Health and Human Services comprised of 27 institutes and centers, with a mission to improve health and well-being through health-related research. While we focus on content shared from

Table 2 – Top ten tips for successful grantmanship for NIH and ACS applications.

Top ten tips
1. DO YOUR HOMEWORK: Go online and look for relevant funders and funding announcements.
2. DO NOT WAIT for an RFA or a specific FOA: If there is a gap in the science and you have a good idea to pursue prepare an application. Let the science guide your application. Do not contort your application to a funding announcement that does not really fit.
3. TALK TO YOUR PROGRAM OFFICER: Talk early, often and after the review if your application did not fare well. Prior to review, ask the Program Officer whether your ideas are of interest to the funder, and who might be the best champion for this work. Review the study section rosters and consider which study sections have on their panel reviewers with the requisite expertise to evaluate the application's merits.
4. FOLLOW DIRECTIONS: For requested format, content, receipt dates, etc.
5. START EARLY: Be willing to write and rewrite your application.
6. WRITE WITH THE REVIEWER IN MIND: Remember that scientific peer review involves individuals similar to you. Most reviewers want to be your advocate, but your job is to convince these individuals that what you want to do is exciting, important, well-thought out, and that you are the right person/team to do it.
7. CRITIQUE: Obtain peer review and critique prior to submission.
8. PERSISTENCE: The majority of applications received are NOT funded on the first submission.
9. MULTIPLE FUNDERS: Do not limit your bright ideas to only one funder (i.e., do not put all your eggs in one basket). Funding sources such as foundations, charitable organizations, patient advocacy groups, and professional societies can be an important source of funding for pilot studies.
10. FOCUS AND SIMPLIFY: Ensure that your aims are connected, focus around a well-defined question or theme, and proceed logically toward your short- and long-term research goals. When in doubt, simplify your aims.

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