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## Cancer Scientists Lament Funding

By MARILYN CHASE

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CHICAGO -- Leading U.S. cancer scientists say that five years of flat federal funding of cancer research is threatening to undo major strides made against the disease.

Nancy Davidson, president of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, said researchers had experienced a \$500 million decline in real spending during "the longest sustained period of flat funding" in memory. She spoke during a news conference Friday opening ASCO's annual meeting. Billed as the world's largest forum on cancer research, this year's event is expected to draw 30,000 people to hear reports on 4,200 studies.

John Niederhuber, director of the National Cancer Institute, a unit of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md., said his organization's \$4.8 billion fiscal-2008 budget -- the main engine of federal funding for cancer research -- has remained in an "unbelievably flat trough since 2004."

Dr. Davidson, a professor of oncology at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, said the situation has led to a curtailment of research into breast cancer, melanoma, sarcoma and pediatric cancer.

"A hundred Phase I and Phase II clinical trials have been postponed, and the number of people able to participate in clinical trials has been reduced by 3,000," she said.

More than 1.4 million Americans will develop cancer this year, and about 560,000 are expected to die from the disease. There now are between 10 million and 11 million U.S. cancer survivors, up from about 3 million in the 1970s -- a measure of the gains that could be threatened.

"I'd like to say I'm an optimist," said Dr. Niederhuber, "but we're not the only pothole that is desperately in need of resources." Potential threats posed by bioterrorism and national disasters have competed for discretionary funds that might have been used for disease-fighting pursuits.

**Write to Marilyn Chase at [marilyn.chase@wsj.com](mailto:marilyn.chase@wsj.com)**<sup>1</sup>