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Dr. Donald Lindberg

Director of the National Library of Medicine

Dr. Donald Lindberg has worked as a scientist for over 50 years and has become widely recognized as an innovator in applying computer technology to health care, medical diagnosis, artificial intelligence, and educational programs. “In terms of genuinely sustained, visionary, and high-impact leadership in using networked information to transform everything from consumer health care to fundamental research in molecular biology and related disciplines,

I can’t think of any organization that can match the record of the National Library of Medicine under Don Lindberg’s leadership,” noted Clifford Lynch, executive director of The Coalition for Networked Information (CNI). “He has been responsible for an incredible string of strategic and often prescient commitments that have changed our world.”

Subject Area/Topic: Medicare Policy: The Positive and Negative Aspects of Sharing the Results of Clinical Drug Trials

Highlights: Dr. Lindberg focused on problems and benefits related to sharing the results (positive and negative) of clinical drug trials. The Food and Drug Act of 1997 required the registration of all drug trials conducted in the US. That legislation was strengthened in 2007 and Dr. Lindberg does not believe that further Congressional action is needed. He does believe that there is a need for greater emphasis on compliance.

There are obvious public benefits from registering and publishing the results of clinical drug trials. Publishing negative results, however, may not be in the commercial interest of drug companies–the funding sponsors of most clinical trials. A 5/20/13 report on 8,907 registered clinical trials revealed that only 10% were published in scientific journals and that 89% were not published. Even when clinical trial results are published, it is often difficult to interpret the results.

There have been cases where defects should have been identified at the trial stage and the product stopped before it went on the market. VIOXX was linked to thousands of deaths and resulted in a legal settlement that cost Merck nearly five billion dollars.

Throughout, Dr. Lindberg emphasized the benefits of information sharing within the scientific community. He sees a greater emphasis on clinical trial registration and more complete publication of results as key to progress in drug development.