

**President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST)**

**THIRTEENTH MEETING**

**September 16, 2011**

**MINUTES**

Washington, DC

Members Present: John P. Holdren (Co-Chair), Eric Lander (Co-Chair), William Press (Vice-Chair), Maxine Savitz (Vice-Chair), Rosina Bierbaum, Christine Cassel, Chris Chyba, Shirley Ann Jackson, Mario Molina, Ernest J. Moniz, Craig Mundie, Ed Penhoet, Barbara Schaal, David E. Shaw, Mark Gorenberg, Daniel Schrag, Ahmed Zewail

Members Absent: Eric Schmidt, Chad Mirkin, S. James Gates Jr., Richard C. Levin

Staff: Danielle Evers, Amber Hartman Scholz, Deborah Stine

Public Attendance: Approximately 80 observers attended.

Video Webcast Archive: The archive of the video webcast is available at [www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/pcast](http://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/pcast)

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The President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) convened in open session at 10:00am with Dr. John Holdren and Dr. Eric Lander presiding on Friday, September 16, 2011.

Agenda Item 1: Welcome from PCAST Co-Chairs

Dr. Holdren, Co-Chair, opened the meeting by describing OSTP and PCAST's collaboration with the President on the American Jobs Act, particularly the Advanced Manufacturing Partnership, science labs and internet connectivity in American classrooms, and expanding access to high speed wireless around the country. He made further remarks on the agenda of OSTP and PCAST going forward, including creating high-tech jobs, protecting the President's commitments to fundamental research and space exploration, improving STEM education, increasing the public's understanding of climate change, supporting the President's key foreign policy and defense priorities, and helping PCAST develop new recommendations and implement existing ones.

Agenda Item 2: Overview of the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration in Environmental Observation and Prediction

Dr. Holdren introduced Dr. Kathryn D. Sullivan, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Environmental Observation and Prediction, and Deputy Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Dr. Sullivan provided an

overview of NOAA's mission and function, and examples of NOAA's work, such as tracking Hurricane Irene and the multiple snowstorms during the winter in 2010. Dr. Sullivan further identified challenges to NOAA's work, including the aging Earth-observing infrastructure, integrating NOAA's role in key national functions, and sustaining capacity for improvement in budget-cutting times.

After the conclusion of Dr. Sullivan's remarks, PCAST members asked questions regarding international collaborations with Europe and the World Meteorological Association, a sub-unit of the United Nations; the financial risks of losing continuity in polar satellite data; the supercomputing controversy; the importance of promoting environmental monitoring before a natural disaster; and the long-term issue of improving the climate-observing system.

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### Agenda Item 2: Overview of the Million Veteran Program

Dr. Lander introduced Dr. Joel Kupersmith, Chief Research and Development Officer at the Veterans Health Administration, and Dr. Timothy O'Leary, Deputy Chief Research and Development Officer, Veterans Health Administration. Dr. Kupersmith explained the mission of the Million Veteran Program, which creates a genomic database with five to seven years of healthcare information on veterans. Dr. Kupersmith explained that this database would allow the VA to link genotypes to complex, adult diseases with strong environmental influences. Veterans would receive an invitation and respond, including providing their consent for health privacy issues. Dr. O'Leary added that they were enrolling 100 patients per day, and set forth some issues to consider going forward, including technical issues with specimen handling and analysis; balancing data sharing with privacy protection; how to return health-related results to participating veterans; and how health-care systems could handle a possible deluge of information.

PCAST members asked about ways of stratifying what the product was for veterans.

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### Agenda Item 3: Update on Implementation of PCAST Health Information Technology Report Recommendations

Dr. Holdren introduced Aneesh Chopra, Chief Technology Officer, Assistant to the President, and Associate Director for Technology in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy; Farzad Mostashari, National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, Department of Health and Human Services; and David Wennergren, Assistant Deputy Chief Management Officer, Department of Defense.

Mr. Chopra began with an update on the President's strategy on health information technology and an update on actions taken in response to the PCAST report. He stated that \$20 billion or more was available in funding through the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and that modernizing the health-care system is one of the key national priorities for the President.

Mr. Mostashari described the sweeping positive movement forward in the area of health information technology, including increases in the adoption of electronic health records, the establishment of systems to support electronic records, such as a large American Recovery and Reinvestment Act investment to establish 62 extension centers to support this work. He further stated that 90 percent of hospital Chief Information Officers say their top priority is to achieve electronic health records, and 10,000 providers a month are registering to participate with these technologies. He also described certain challenges and recommendations going forward, including building the case for the initial investment, putting the patient first by adopting a patient-centered approach, and building interfaces so that patients can have more control over their own information. He also described Query Health, a public-private partnership to allow for population inquiries without centralizing the data.

Mr. Wennergren described the Department of Defense model for modernizing electronic health records, ensuring continuity of care for veterans. He explained that DOD has adopted a common data model and is working on adoption of national standards by the Veterans Administration, aligning the VA with DOD. He also noted some privacy concerns, including aggregation of data and network security.

Mr. Chopra concluded that as the health care system evolves to a payment model that values care quality and wellness, it is important that the patient-centered approach endure as they move to a model informed by PCAST's vision. This will include adopting more liberated data systems, publishing information that is legally allowed to be in the public sphere, and moving to a different payment model.

PCAST members asked about how to combine the DOD system with other federal systems, such as CMS, and the impact of Query Health on health care costs.

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#### Agenda Item 4: Public Comment

Dr. Bill Press moderated the public comment session. Two members of the public provided comments to PCAST in person: *Ward Cassels*, Professor, University of Texas; and *Jerome Dancis*, Associate Professor Emeritus of Mathematics, University of Maryland.

Additionally, numerous individuals provided written comments to PCAST, and three of these comments were read aloud by PCAST staff. All submitted comments are posted on the PCAST website.

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Dr. Holdren adjourned the meeting at approximately 3:30pm.

Respectfully Submitted:



Deborah D. Stine  
Executive Director  
President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology

Approved:



John P. Holdren  
Co-Chair  
President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology



Eric Lander  
Co-Chair  
President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology