

# Obama says \$5B in grants will aid medical research

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(AP) -- Calling scientific research a job-creating engine, President Barack Obama heralded \$5 billion in new government grants Wednesday to fight cancer, autism and heart disease while boosting the economy.

Obama described the money as crucial to improving public health and helping add jobs to an economy that has seen unemployment surge. Visiting the Bethesda campus of the National Institutes of Health, he said that its projects illustrate the dual goals of the \$787 billion [economic stimulus bill](#): rescuing the economy and laying the groundwork for future generations' stability.

"The American people are looking forward to the next set of discoveries that you are working on today," Obama told employees.

Altogether, the stimulus bill included \$10 billion for NIH. More than \$1 billion of it would be directed to work on genetic research that could identify the causes and cures for ailments ranging from heart and lung disease to blood diseases and autism.

The White House said the \$5 billion in grants announced Wednesday would support some 12,000 existing projects and create thousands of jobs over the next two years for researchers and educators, as well as for medical equipment makers and suppliers.

Obama called it the "single largest boost to biomedical research in history."

The investment includes \$175 million for The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA) to collect more than 20,000 tissue samples from more than 20 cancers, and determine in detail all of the genetic changes in thousands of these tumor samples.

The cancer study involves more than 150 scientists at dozens of institutions around the country, the White House said in a statement released before Obama took the stage, joined by his Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and his NIH director, Dr. Francis S. Collins.

"We can't know where this research will lead. That's the nature of science," Collins said.

Obama said that was OK, too.

"Breakthroughs in medical research take far more than the occasional flash of brilliance, as important as that can be," Obama said. "Progress takes time, it takes hard work, it can be unpredictable, it can require a willingness to take risks, going down some blind alleys occasionally. Figuring out what doesn't work is sometimes as important as figuring out what does."

Obama added that NIH research should focus on the [public health](#), not investors or corporate owners.

"We know that the work you do would not get done if left solely to the private sector. Some research does not lend itself to quick profit," he said. "And that's why places like the NIH were founded."

Obama, who has taken steps to paint himself as a pro-science president - a dig at his predecessor who was accused of having put politics over evidence - also made a point of praising the NIH scientists.

"The work you do is not easy. It takes a great deal of patience and persistence, but it holds incredible promise for the health of our people and the future of our nation and our world," he said.

"And yet, if we're honest, in recent years, we've seen our leadership slipping as scientific integrity was at times undermined and research funding failed to keep pace."

Before making remarks about the grants, Obama and Sebelius toured an NIH oncology laboratory.

"That's a pretty spiffy microscope," the president quipped as he walked through the lab. Researchers allowed Obama to take a look at the brain cells they're studying, explaining the difference between healthy cells and cancerous cells.

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