The Honorable Mike Leavitt  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Ave. SW  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are concerned about the timeliness of a National Institutes of Health (NIH), taxpayer funded research project concerning diet and cancer. This important, coordinated effort has been underway for more than seven years. As part of a NIH funded initiative, nineteen studies on dietary factors and their contribution to the development of various types of cancer have been published since 2000. However, there is one study that was completed in 2004 and presented in an abstract, but remains unpublished.

The study, "Meat and fat intake and colorectal cancer risk: A pooled analysis of 14 prospective studies (and 725,300 subjects)." by E. Cho and S.A. Smith-Warner, analyzed the role of red and processed meat in the development of colon cancer. According to the report’s abstract, presented in March 2004, the researchers found no association between consumption of red meat and fat intake and colorectal cancer risk.

As you know, the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) is completing work on its 2007 Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity and the Prevention of Cancer: a Global Perspective, due out November 1, 2007. This report will make numerous nutrition recommendations and stands to have a significant impact on public policy worldwide. We find it concerning that a landmark study of this size and scope and summarized for presentation in early 2004 was not published as a full manuscript in time for consideration by WCRF’s panel.

Mr. Secretary, we appreciate your leadership in this important field of cancer research. Given the extensive discussions in recent years about prompt publication of research, especially that funded by taxpayers, and the 1999 NIH Principles and Guidelines for Recipients of NIH Research Grants, what is the status of the report and what are the department’s plans for its release? We thank you in advance for your timely response.

Sincerely,

Pat Roberts

Sam Brownback