



National Institutes of Health  
National Cancer Institute  
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

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To: Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

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Subject: Generic Sub-study, “**Collection of Data from NCI’s Cancer Information Service (CIS) Website Clients via E-mail Contact Form**” under “Formative Research, Pretesting, and Customer Satisfaction of NCI’s Office of Communications and Education,”  
(OMB No. 0925-0046-17; Expiration Date 02/13/2013)

### Background, Need and Use of Information

The NCI Office of Communication and Education (OCE) advances the mission of NCI by disseminating research results to the public to improve the lives of those affected by cancer. Working closely with scientists and partners, OCE uses effective methods to reach diverse audiences and meet their needs for the latest, evidence-based cancer information. OCE audiences include consumers, researchers, healthcare providers, advocates, media, students, and policymakers.

The official NCI website, [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov), is one such method that OCE uses to broaden its reach across a wide variety of public audiences. The website receives more than two million visits and between six to seven million page views every month. Another method is the NCI’s Cancer Information Service (CIS) (OMB No. 0925-0208, Expiration Date 8/31/2012). CIS responds to cancer-related questions from patients, their families and friends, the general public and health professionals through a variety of communications channels. These include telephone, email, and live chat through NCI’s web site. E-mail is particularly challenging because the current online e-mail contact form provides little direction or assessment of a situation. The form solicits just three pieces of information: the e-mail subject of inquiry, the body of the e-mail including the requested information by the client, and the client’s e-mail address. Because the current form asks for minimal information, e-mails are often vague and responses hard to tailor. Omission of certain key facts hinders CIS staff’s ability to provide medically relevant information;

for example, if a client types “I need information about breast cancer,” the request contains no context as to whether this is a patient, friend, family, or member of the public. It also does not address the cancer situation making it difficult to tailor a response and thus satisfy the information needs of the requester. Another example of an inquiry might be if a client asks how cancer is diagnosed and they identify themselves as a patient, we might suggest questions they could ask their physician that could both foster the doctor-patient relationship as well as give the patient tools that could be effective in gathering the information they need. More specific information about the client would prevent CIS staff from trying to guess what clients are asking, and waste time researching and responding to unclear and/or incomplete questions that may or may not fully convey the extent of clients’ needs. The time spent attempting to understand a client’s question would be more efficiently spent if the e-mail contact form requested more specific information from the start.

In this regard, OCE seeks to test a new e-mail contact form that solicits more detailed information from website users. A more comprehensive form would allow CIS responders to tailor their answers more specifically to clients’ individual needs and ultimately facilitate more efficient interaction with the public. A number of government agencies are using email intake forms to best meet the needs of their users. Such a form demonstrates practical utility to the Government by limiting duplicitous questions and answers, helping to ensure swift delivery of answers to often time-sensitive inquiries, and taking full advantage of the limited time available to CIS staff to serve the greatest number of clients possible. It would also give NCI valuable data on “the pulse of the public” of the types of information needs they have and inform how best we might inform not only responses but also the development of our public education materials based on this data. Furthermore, more productive exchanges between NCI staff and the public would solidify NCI’s reputation as a high performing organization that is a trusted and valuable source of accurate, scientifically based cancer information.

The Canadian Cancer Society has been using a similar form for several years. Rather than recreate a form, we have selected certain features of Canada’s email form. On its form, the nonprofit asks for specific pieces of information to more expeditiously disseminate information to its clients.

To test usability of the new e-mail contact form, OCE will seek feedback from 200 persons. Staff will collect general commentary from these individuals. The responses garnered will be invaluable to the creation of a more tailored e-mail contact form. Feedback from testers will be reviewed by NCI staff in OCE and will be utilized to adapt the form.

#### Participants

Patients, their families and friends and the general public will participate in review of the form and will provide feedback. This is based on all email data from 2010 that indicated the following demographics of E-mail users (**Attachment 17A**): Patients – 15%; Spouse, Relative, or Friend of a Diagnosed Cancer Patient - 33.6%; General Public - 27.9 %

- General commentary will be collected from 200 individuals
- A brief set of questions will be provided for the 200 individuals to respond to on a voluntary basis

#### Research Instrument

The attached draft e-mail contact form will be used as the research instrument (**Attachment 17C**). As the draft form currently stands, it will collect email address, client type, type of cancer-related question, zip code, and country

Methodology

On the NCI home page of [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov) are two text boxes called “Questions About Cancer” at the top and bottom of the page. Clicking on the text box brings users to a “Contact Us For Help” landing page that lists four ways of reaching information specialists at the CIS (**Attachment 17B**). We propose adding to the paragraph titled “E-mail.” “Help us evaluate a new e-mail form”. The user would click on the associated link that would take them to the draft form and a short set of questions. User review would be completely voluntary (**Attachment 17D**).

Questions to be located at the end of the draft new e-mail form:

1. Are these questions what you would expect in order to get a complete cancer-related response?
2. Do the questions solicit the most relevant information to in order to receive a satisfying response?
3. What is your preferred way of receiving information?
  - a. Phone
  - b. Email
  - c. Live Chat
  - d. Social media
4. Do you find these questions burdensome or invasive?
5. Please include any additional comments or suggestions.

“Help us evaluate a new e-mail form” could be promoted through several channels: NCI’s biweekly NCI Cancer Bulletin on-line newsletter; through the Office of Advocacy relations who communicates regularly with the cancer advocacy community; and through the CIS following their tailored email response during usual service. The CIS would respond to the original email inquiry then send a second email letting the individual know that we are soliciting feedback on a new e-mail contact form.

This would be a one-time collection and would not include remuneration for completing the brief survey.

Analysis of the responses to the questions will be qualitative. We are interested in feedback as to whether user believes the E-mail intake form will help NCI provide a more tailored response to the individual thus meeting their information needs. Currently in some cases, when very little information is provided by the individual, NCI is unable to provide a response.

Other Considerations

The Office of Human Subjects Research (OHSR) will be asked to review for this proposal for OHSR exemption or IRB approval. The NIH Privacy Act Officer, will be asked to review the sub-study for PII and Privacy Act applicability.

Both the email form and the survey (**Attachments 17C and 17D**) should take each of the participants no more than 10 minutes to complete.

Estimates of Hour Burden and Respondent Cost				
Types of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Frequency of Response	Average Time Per Response Minutes/Hours	Total Hour Burden
Patients, friends, family, general public	200	1	10/60 (0.167)	33 hrs

**List of Attachments (below)**

- 17A. 2010 e-mail contact demographic data
- 17B. Screen shot of NCI Contact Us Page

**List of Attachments (in separate file)**

- 17C. New E-mail contact form
- 17D. Survey questions about the new e-mail contact form

ATTACHMENT 17A

2010 E-MAIL CONTACT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

*CIS Contact Record Form Data Analysis, Email Point of Contact,  
January - December 2010*

**National Total**

**Type of User, collapsed codes**

- **Patient (N 1,191) ; 15.0 %**
- **Spouse, Relative, or Friend of a Diagnosed Cancer Patient (N 2,670); 33.6%**
- **General Public (N 2,217) ; 27.9 %**
- **Organization (N 341) ; 4.3 %**
- **Professionals (N 715) ; 9.0 %**
- **Not Able To Ascertain (N 803); 10.1 %**
- **Total N 7,937**

ATTACHMENT 17B  
SCREEN SHOT OF NCI CONTACT US PAGE

In English | [En español](#)

**National Cancer Institute**  
at the National Institutes of Health

**Questions About Cancer?**  
**1-800-4-CANCER**

Search  **SEARCH**

- [NCI Home](#)
- [Cancer Topics](#)
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- [Cancer Statistics](#)
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### Contact Us for Help

[In English](#) | [En español](#)



#### Page Options

- [Print This Page](#)
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#### Quick Links

- [Director's Page](#)  
About the Director
- [Dictionary of Cancer Terms](#)

#### Help Options

Cancer information specialists can answer your questions about cancer and help you with quitting smoking. They can also help you with using this Web site and can tell you about NCI's printed and electronic materials. Cancer information specialists have access to comprehensive, accurate information on a range of cancer topics, including the most recent advances in cancer treatment. They are knowledgeable, caring, and experienced at explaining medical information. The service is confidential, and information specialists spend as much time as needed for thorough and personalized responses.

**Important:** NCI provides cancer related information for your general knowledge. Please note we cannot

Cancer-related terms

[NCI Drug Dictionary](#)

Definitions, names, and links

[Funding Opportunities](#)

Research and training

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Information, meetings, reports

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**NCI Highlights**

[NCI Director's Testimony Before Senate Appropriations Committee](#)

[The Nation's Investment in Cancer Research: 2012](#)







[The Provocative Questions Project](#)

[NCI Funded Research Portfolio](#)

[Interactive NCI Budget Analysis Tool](#)

[Recovery Act at NCI](#)

answer personal medical questions, make referrals to specific doctors or institutions, or give medical advice. Concerns about a medical condition - either your own or that of a family member or friend, should always be directed to a health care professional.

	<p><b>Telephone</b> Talk with an information specialist from the NCI's Cancer Information Service, in English or Spanish, within the United States, Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time.</p> <p><b>1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)</b></p>	
	<p><b>LiveHelp Online Chat</b> Have a confidential online text chat with a cancer information specialist from the NCI's Cancer Information Service - Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. Eastern Time. <a href="#">LiveHelp</a></p>	
	<p><b>E-mail</b> If you have questions or comments or are unable to find what you need on this site, please feel free to contact us, in English or Spanish, using our online contact form.</p> <p><a href="#">E-mail Us</a></p> <p><a href="#">Help us evaluate a new E-mail form</a></p>	
	<p><b>Mail</b> Write to the National Cancer Institute at:</p> <p>NCI Office of Communications and Education Public Inquiries Office 6116 Executive Boulevard Suite 300 Bethesda, MD 20892-8322</p>	

**Help Using This Site**

NCI's central Web site (<http://www.cancer.gov>) has extensive information on cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment, statistics, research, clinical trials, and news, as well as links to other NCI Web sites. See [Help Using the NCI Web Site](#) for more information.

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

The answer to your question may be in our Web site's [FAQs](#) list.

### **Contributions**

For information about contributing to the National Cancer Institute, please go to <http://obf.cancer.gov/contribute/contribute.htm>.

### **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)**

If you would like to make a FOIA request to obtain NCI documents or data that are not available in the public domain, please see this Web site's [policy page about FOIA requests](#).

### **If You Live Outside the U.S.**

Those living outside the United States may wish to contact one of the following for cancer-related information:

[International Union Against Cancer \(UICC\)](#)

[International Cancer Information Services](#)

### **Information in Spanish / información en español**

[El Servicio de Información sobre el Cáncer del NCI ofrece servicio telefónico en español](#). En Estados Unidos y sus territorios, llame al 1-800-422-6237 (1-800-4-CANCER), de lunes a viernes, de 8 de la mañana a 8 de la noche, hora del Este.

O, usted puede enviar un mensaje electrónico a [nciespanol@mail.nih.gov](mailto:nciespanol@mail.nih.gov). Si su mensaje requiere una respuesta, puede esperar recibirla en 5 días laborables.

No podemos responder a preguntas específicas de medicina, ni dar referencias o consultas. El médico familiarizado con el estado del paciente es el más indicado para responder a preguntas específicas de medicina.

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