**Transparency and availability of data for cancer research**

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Open research data allows for verification, replication, scrutiny, and subsequent analyses of published studies, while reducing likelihood of research duplication. By contrast, failing to publish data, which is a key impediment in the fight against cancer and non-communicable disease epidemics, hinders timely and effective response to these challenges.1 Hence, data should be liberated and made widely available to researchers.(1)

In 2014–15 alone, Cancer Research UK (CRUK) invested £341 million in cancer research, information, public policy, and advocacy.(2) However, CRUK remains restrictive about the sources and level of funding awarded to specific types of cancer. This characteristic is unique among major funders in the UK and USA, from a previous analysis of more than 200 organisations.(3) Without this information, it is difficult to compare investments with other national and international funders of cancer research and development.

The consensus is that public institutions and philanthropic organisations should openly publish their research funding data. Philanthropic research funders, such as the Wellcome Trust, and public research funders, such as the Medical Research Council in the UK and the National Cancer Institutes in the USA, routinely publish data for sponsored research and directly link the awarded funding to the respective study focus or health need.

At a 2016 symposium hosted by the Gurdon Institute at the University of Cambridge (Cambridge, UK), representatives from the Wellcome Trust and CRUK shared their views and policies on data management—and agreement on the expansion of data sharing.(4, 5) These funders, among many others, openly agreed and actively encouraged that research data should be “available, accessible, and discoverable”, and the same principle should apply to research funding.

Offering of research data for open review is a social and public health imperative. We urge CRUK to reform its approach to open funding data, and to make steps for information sharing to be aligned with its publicly declared policy of open research data.

References

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