



Greed impeding progress on cancer research

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Having lost both my parents to cancer, I read with considerable interest the article in Saturday's Daily News, "War on Cancer: Biden Says Politics Impeding Cure," by Josh Lederman and Kathy Matheson. The story was about the vice president's recently announced initiative to rid humanity of this devastating disease.

"Biden has described a system in which competition, territorialism and 'stove-piping' of information leave researchers and their discoveries cloistered in their own corners," Lederman and Matheson write. "His campaign this year will work to encourage more data-sharing about patient data and treatment outcomes."

One of the biggest obstacles standing in the way of our current efforts to find a cure for cancer is greed. Since the government essentially absolved itself of the responsibility to eradicate this horrific illness – affecting more and more of us with each passing year – the task has largely fallen to the private sector.

Enter the profit motive.

Science works best in an environment that encourages the free exchange of knowledge and ideas; i.e., one in which critical information about the efficacy of different treatment options is openly and enthusiastically shared by all researchers.

Progress is hindered, however, when the motives of those seeking to uncover better therapies is corrupted by the quest for financial gain. The desire to keep promising lines of inquiry proprietary significantly impedes the advances that could otherwise be made in the ongoing "war on cancer."

While I am all about the free market when it comes to most pursuits, I draw the line when it is applied to the provision of health care. Nobody should ever die because of a business plan that sees malignancy as a money-making proposition.

I truly believe there is a special place in hell for those who are willing to put corporate profits ahead of moral obligations.

Aaron W. Hughey
Bowling Green

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