

BIOTECH

Cystic Fibrosis group chases \$175M for biotech research

By Neil Adler
Staff Reporter

The Cystic Fibrosis Foundation hopes to raise \$175 million in a new campaign that's part of a larger effort to increase funding for scientific research.

The Bethesda-based foundation believes it will need to invest \$1 billion in research by 2010 to keep pace with all the work being done to treat cystic fibrosis.

Foundation President and CEO Bob Beall says the new campaign will branch out from traditional initiatives to focus on donors likely to give larger gifts.

The foundation already has collected \$74 million toward its \$175 million goal, he says. "We're like every other biotech organization. We're out looking for money.

We need this money as quickly as possible."

With the \$175 million and revenue from its existing investments and sources, the foundation (www.cff.org) expects to get the \$1 billion by 2010.

The group's objective is to increase the life expectancy of people living with cystic fibrosis, a genetic disorder that affects the mucus lining of lungs and leads to breathing and digestive problems, among other difficulties. When the foundation was established in 1955, most children who had the disease died before entering elementary school. Now, the median age of survival for patients with cystic fibrosis is 35.

"We'd like for patients to be dying with cystic fibrosis, not because of it," Beall says. "We have made tremendous progress over the last 50 years. And yet there is still

so much more work to be done. We need the infusion of this campaign, along with the remarkable support from our traditional resources, to help us reach our goal of a cure."

With financial support from the foundation, researchers are trying to commercialize more than 20 drugs for treating cystic fibrosis. The drugs are in various stages of testing, including several in the pivotal Phase III clinical trials.

One local company that has been working with the foundation since March is Germantown-based BSI Proteomics (www.bsiproteomics.com), which is applying its technology to develop tools for cystic fibrosis drug discovery.

BSI Proteomics researchers are attempting to purify the protein formed by the cystic fibrosis gene. The company will then work to crystallize the protein to determine its structure.

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