



FACT SHEET

CARRA Web Site
<http://la.cancer.gov/carra/>

Office of Liaison Activities
<http://la.cancer.gov/>

National Cancer Institute
www.cancer.gov/

National Institutes of Health
<http://www.nih.gov>

Department of Health and
Human Services
<http://www.dhhs.gov/>

NCI Resources

[NCI Cancer Bulletin](#)

[cancer Biomedical Informatics
Grid \(caBIG\)](#)

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NCI Divisions

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WHAT IS THE CARRA PROGRAM?

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) values the opinions of cancer survivors and others whose lives have been affected by cancer. The NCI Consumer Advocates in Research and Related Activities (CARRA) program was created to integrate the perspective of people affected by cancer into NCI's programs and activities.

The CARRA program is administered by the NCI Office of Liaison Activities (OLA). The program consists of approximately 200 consumer advocates from many different cancer types, age groups, and ethnic groups across the nation. CARRA members form a highly qualified, pre-screened group of people. As they participate in a wide range of NCI activities, they represent the collective viewpoint of their cancer community. CARRA members also play a critical role as two-way information links between their own cancer-related networks and the NCI.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE CARRA PROGRAM?

CARRA members serve 3-year terms. For each recruitment period, OLA accepts applications from individuals who are cancer survivors, family members or partners of cancer survivors, or those who have had more than 3 years of involvement in cancer-related activities. In addition, applicants must also:

- Communicate on a regular basis with a cancer constituency (an advocacy group, support group, or other similar organization)
- Demonstrate a willingness and ability to learn more about cancer and cancer issues
- Be fluent in English and have at least a high school diploma

The CARRA member selection process also strives to ensure diversity among members and balance across cancer types. The most recent selection process for new CARRA members was conducted in 2004, for new members whose term will end in 2007.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE CARRA PROGRAM?

There are two CARRA program goals, jointly established by consumers, researchers, and administrators:

- ▶ To increase opportunities for CARRA members to provide input on NCI's research activities involving scientific research and communication of scientific research.
- ▶ To help foster an organizational atmosphere that values the perspectives and contributions of consumer advocates, through the involvement of CARRA members in NCI activities.

HOW DOES THE CARRA PROGRAM WORK?

CARRA members participate in individual NCI activities on an as-needed basis. NCI staff across the span of the Institute's programs request the involvement of a consumer advocate. Then CARRA members are carefully matched to those NCI activities based on a combination of their skills, interests, experiences, and NCI program needs.

WHAT KINDS OF ACTIVITIES DO CARRA MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN?

The primary mission of the NCI is to conduct and support cancer research. Accordingly, CARRA members participate in activities that focus on the scientific merit of proposed research and the communication of research results. CARRA members most frequently participate in the peer review process for evaluating research applications. They also help assess patient-oriented materials, such as Web sites, brochures, and videos, in their developmental stages. In addition, CARRA members are invited to participate in workshops or meetings, to represent the consumer advocate viewpoint.

WHY WAS THE CARRA PROGRAM STARTED?

The CARRA program was started as a way to systematically and effectively involve consumer advocates in NCI's daily work activities. Prior to CARRA, advocates had been involved with NCI for a number of years, participating in discrete activities. The CARRA program was created to provide an integrated, systematic mechanism for matching highly qualified advocates with research and research-related activities that span the Institute. The CARRA program also provides an infrastructure that promotes effective two-way communication between the NCI and members of cancer-related constituencies across the country.

HOW OFTEN IS THE CARRA PROGRAM UTILIZED AT NCI?

In the first 2 ½ years of the CARRA program (September 2001 through March 2004), NCI staff requested CARRA member participation in 218 activities. Prior to the CARRA program, NCI staff contacted the Office of Liaison Activities (OLA) to request advocate participation about 25 times a year. Hence, there has been a large increase in advocate usage. The number and range of CARRA requests is updated on the CARRA Web site at http://www.la.cancer.gov/CARRA/about_carra.html#8.

DO CARRA MEMBERS RECEIVE ORIENTATION OR TRAINING?

OLA provides a general orientation about the NCI and the roles and responsibilities of CARRA members. Mentors (CARRA members with experience in participating in NCI activities) may also be provided on an individual basis. Peer review training workshops are being conducted to assist consumer advocates in becoming more effective participants in the scientific peer review process. In addition, NCI staff members provide orientation and guidance to CARRA members in individual activities.

ARE CARRA MEMBERS PAID TO PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVITIES?

Depending on the particular activity, CARRA members *may* or *may not* be paid an honorarium for their participation. CARRA members are compensated for approved travel expenses if travel is required for the NCI activity.

HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CARRA PROGRAM?

- Visit the CARRA Web site at <http://la.cancer.gov/CARRA>
- Email the CARRA program at ncicarra@mail.nih.gov
- Call the NCI Office of Liaison Activities at 301-594-3194

CONTACT US

The CARRA program is administered by the Office of Liaison Activities (OLA), which is the contact point for advocacy groups and professional societies at the NCI. To learn more about OLA, please visit our Web site at <http://la.cancer.gov> or contact us at:

Office of Liaison Activities
6116 Executive Blvd.
Suite 220, MSC 8324
Bethesda, MD 20892-8324

301.594.3194
301.480.7558 (FAX)

liaison@od.nci.nih.gov



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