

**Opening Remarks**  
*Steven Teutsch, M.D., M.P.H.*

---

DR. TEUTSCH: Good morning, everyone. Welcome back. We had an interesting session yesterday. Rick and I were just comparing notes about yesterday afternoon's session and the opportunity to continue that discussion this morning.

Before we get into that discussion, I want to introduce, for those of you who may not know him, our regular and close friend of the Committee, Rick Campanelli, who is the counselor for science and health policy here in the Department. I say he is a close friend because he is the man who helps us with carrying the message to the Secretary and helping us get our work done in an effective way. We are always appreciative of his support and always delighted to see him here.

Rick is here today on a bittersweet mission, so let me turn it over to you, Rick.

DR. CAMPANELLI: The bittersweet mission is to say a few words on behalf of a person who is a friend to me and to all of us. The occasion is Francis Collins' departure from SACGHS. I thought I should be at the podium to do that, so I had to come up here.

It is great to be with you all again. It was very interesting, wasn't it, to be with many of you yesterday for the discussion about the intersection of consumer health and consumer access to information and genomic medicine. I know that you are going to continue that today.

I have had a chance to visit with you up here a number of times on substantive issues but most recently on the occasion of Reed Tuckson's departure from the Committee and now on the occasion of Francis Collins' departure from the Committee. I don't want you to think that every time I come somebody is departing.

[Laughter.]

DR. CAMPANELLI: It could be a bad sign.

But it is not. I really hope that is not true because we very much appreciate and recognize the importance of your work and are grateful for it and all of your involvement and the time you are committing.

I do have the honor today, on behalf of Secretary Leavitt and all of my colleagues at the Department, to say thank you to you, Francis, for your service to this community for many, many years. I should probably just say many years, not many, many, although it is true.

Francis, in recent weeks with the passage of GINA we have had the chance to recognize your important contributions in advocating for patient protections that ultimately resulted in the passage of GINA. If we had known that shortly after it passed you would be announcing your departure from the Department, we may have left a few wrinkles in there that would require you to stay on longer or maybe not work so hard.

Actually, it was a great effort for many years on behalf of many people. I know Francis recognizes that. But especially, Francis, you and your team, and you personally, made a great contribution and really helped to push that toward the end. It took a great concerted effort, as you and I both know, to get the ball over the goal line, and to good effect.

SACGHS Meeting Transcript  
July 8, 2008

All of us know as well, though, that our debt of gratitude to Francis goes far beyond GINA, as important as that is. You shaped the vision of the Human Genome Project, and with your team at NHGRI and NIH you advanced science achievements that have unlocked and will continue to unlock so much potential for improving human health.

That phrase, "unlocking and continuing to unlock so much potential for human health," that is an audacious statement. It is amazing because it is true. Sometimes you say things like that, but I was just rolling that thing around in my mind.

I remember the first time we met. I had the privilege of sitting in your office, and I really felt it a privilege, as I do now, to have sat in your office, as you walked me through where things were with genomic research and where things were at NHGRI.

At one point you got that smile on your face that I know we all recognize -- that you have right now -- and that I have come to see so often when you talk about your work. I have often thought that that is the smile of the joy of the privilege of great discovery. You see it on the faces of little children a lot when they discover things, but you don't often see it on the faces of sophisticated adults and great scientists. It is something that I think all of us can really emulate and look to, the joy that you have had in your work.

Francis, with you it is contagious. It is hard not to smile back. You said to me then that in years to come people will look back on this era of unlocking the genome as the ushering in of a whole new era in science, perhaps unmatched in the history of medicine. You weren't talking about your accomplishments but about what it meant for all of us for how we view health care.

Just yesterday I was talking with one of the leaders of the new Scripps Medical School, an institution not even open yet, where the curriculum will fully integrate genomic science and throughout the curriculum. They are the leading edge, perhaps, of the next generation of doctors, prepared to bring these results to the bedside, a new army being formed, prepared to fight disease and sickness with new weapons, weapons which you helped to give them.

This is a wonderful gift that you have given all of us, but there is something that is just as significant as the discoveries themselves. In all of these wonderful discoveries you have kept insight and become a recognized voice for making sure that science and scientists consider all of the important issues and steps as they pursue their path. GINA is one of those examples.

But in addition, you have become, and we will trust you will continue to be, a voice that ensures that ethical issues remain at the forefront as we pursue the wonderful science that is upon us.

Recently, I was at a dinner with a person pretty high up in the government of the EU. He had an important leadership position and was involved in some controversial aspects of human molecular research that has been in the press. At one point he was enthusiastically describing some of these things. I asked in a gentle way how is it that he was able to integrate the significant moral and ethical debate in the effort of pursuing science there.

This is what he did. He turned his face sideways away and waved his hand in a big arc, and then just continued with the scientific discussion. So the scientific discussion went on, and it was very interesting and very valuable, and we engaged in that scientific discussion.

Then he said, "But I don't think you could do a lot of this in the U.S." It seemed to me a natural question, so I said -- and this is why you don't want to invite me to dinner -- "Well, how is it,

SACGHS Meeting Transcript  
July 8, 2008

then, that you deal with or integrate the significant moral and ethical questions?" He turned his head away and waved his hand.

Francis, you have contributed so much to science. No one can deny it. Just as importantly, your life and voice have reminded all of us that we can and must always be able to entertain these important questions even as we are fully engaged in excellent science. You have kept the big picture of health and the ways that science and technology is applied to it in mind, and in so doing you have enriched our science and our public debate.

Not only are you open to true scientific inquiry and debate, but you are a really good debater. I know. I have had the privilege of engaging in and learning from you at the intersections of policy and law, and some recently. It has always been a joy and it has always been a great education for me. It has been one of the wonderful privileges of my time as counselor to the Secretary.

Fifteen years is a long time at anything, and I am sure that over the next week there will be many attempts to tell the Francis Story, and there should be. Your work and contributions to this Committee have had a remarkable influence. Now, after many reports, meetings, and conference calls, at the end of this particular journey I think all of us can acknowledge that you have helped take us to a new land with an appreciation for science and the benefits of what it means for those who follow.

We here want to acknowledge your many valuable contributions, and I want to say thank you on behalf of the Secretary and the Department. We thank you for bringing together the discipline and mind of a great scientist and especially bringing it together with the joy and the exuberance of a boy on the edge of a great adventure. Thank you very much.

[Applause.]

DR. TEUTSCH: Before I allow you to say something, I want to say a few words on behalf of the Committee as well. I haven't known you as long as Rick has, but nonetheless, from a distance it has been extraordinary to see all that you have accomplished.

Yesterday we talked about the things that have happened over the last few months that this Committee is proud of, and we talked about those events: reports that have gone to Rick and the Secretary which we hope will have an impact. But the one thing we didn't talk about, and perhaps the biggest of those events of course, is the amazing news of the next steps in your career, or what we hope to learn about them and the accomplishments that you have going forward.

DR. COLLINS: I hope to learn, too.

[Laughter.]

DR. TEUTSCH: I wasn't here when these committees were created, but I understand fully that you were the pivotal person who recognized the importance of advisory groups and that helped to create the Advisory Committee on Genomic Testing and now this Committee.

It has been important to us that this Committee has been able to tackle some of the complex issues that you have been facing for your entire career. We very much appreciate all the wisdom that you have brought to us and to the country and the kind of scientific leadership that you

SACGHS Meeting Transcript  
July 8, 2008

represent. It is the kind of thing that we hope will continue to be fostered here in the Government, and we know that you are going to go on to great new achievements.

On behalf of the Committee, though, we do hope that you will stay with us, that you will be a member ex officio emeritus so that we can continue to benefit from all your ideas and suggestions.

As a token, we wanted to present you with this gift, which we hope you will find to be a fitting symbol of your extraordinary leadership and vision as you move forward to the next steps in your career.

While this is surely not the first, nor will it be the last star that you have received, we want you to be assured that this one comes with the Committee's enduring respect, gratitude, best wishes, and admiration. So, many thanks to you.

[Applause.]

DR. COLLINS: Since I'm still a government employee, I assume this is all entirely okay with all of our various rules.

DR. TEUTSCH: Yes, we have had it fully vetted.

DR. COLLINS: Oh, wow. My goodness. How beautiful. Thank you all.

[Applause.]

DR. COLLINS: Well, I didn't expect this at all. I guess it is a good thing I didn't show up late this morning.

[Laughter.]

DR. COLLINS: Having been in a different time zone for the last few days, there was a serious possibility of missing the alarm going off. But I'm really glad to have made it here in time for these really very unexpected and wonderfully comforting words from both of you.

This decision of mine to decide to move on to the white space of unemployment has not been arrived at easily, but after 15 years of this incredible privilege of having a chance to stand at the helm of the Genome Institute I felt it was time to seek some other opportunity to serve in a way that is yet to be defined, for several reasons.

One is, it is really difficult as an NIH institute director to do much in the way of a serious exploration of next opportunities without bumping into potential conflicts of interest. It seemed more reasonable to step out into a place where those would not apply and do a more leisurely kind of search, hoping at the same time not to run out of grocery money.

It also is going to give me a chance, I think, to do some reflection about where we have come from and where we may be going and what are the next opportunities that I might be most usefully able to contribute to.

SACGHS Meeting Transcript  
July 8, 2008

I could talk for a long time about the way in which this particular Committee, the SACGHS, and its predecessors occupy a critical place for the deliberation on the issues that are so near and dear to my heart and to all of you who are putting your time into this.

I have to say, Rick, it has just been delightful and wonderful, with your arrival on the scene, to have such a comrade of serious interest, intent, and dedication in the Department as a point of contact for those many issues where really serious attention needed to be paid to getting things done. You have just been a wonderfully helpful partner in that regard. I'm going to miss the chance to interact in those ways but hopefully find other ways to do so.

I think we should all recognize that Secretary Leavitt has really elevated the importance of these issues and this Committee into a place that it needed to be and was gradually finding its way into that kind of visibility, but this has really come into its own because of his strong leadership and his interest in personalized medicine.

That has been wonderful to see happening. I certainly remember those years going back, because there are a lot of them, where it was really hard to get that kind of traction. People didn't necessarily appreciate that this was a topic or a set of topics that were in need of that kind of high level attention. It has been wonderful to see that happening.

I see Greg Downing standing in the back. I also want to give a real shout out to Greg here for the way in which he has played such a critical role in the Department in terms of being a leader in trying to wrestle through these many interconnecting issues that have needed that kind of high level attention and that he has done so well.

Steve, I thank you for your kind remarks and your willingness to step into the role here of leading this enterprise and to do so so effectively. Your predecessor Reed, of course, played that role so effectively.

The work is not done. Clearly, as you all wrestled with the agenda items yesterday, there are many things that need attention in a pressing way. The American public really needs all of you to be able to be sure that we take this remarkable moment in history -- and it really is -- where we have the opportunity to transform the practice of medicine and make sure that we do so in a fashion that benefits people and doesn't expose them to unnecessary risks.

That means moving all of these disciplines and all these issues together in a way that really only a group such as this can effectively do.

It has been a great honor and a great privilege to be the NIH liaison to this group. I'm going to miss that. I may take up your invitation and sit in one of those back chairs in the future meetings because I will not stop my interest in personalized medicine.

In fact, one of the things I hope to do during this unemployment phase is to write a little book about personalized medicine because I think there is a lot of interest in the public and perhaps a need for that kind of a depiction of what we know and what we don't know in a fashion that is accessible to people who don't have Ph.D.s in genetics. Maybe I could make some contribution in that regard.

I don't know where I will land. I don't know where I will be a year from now. That is part of the adventure, is to try to figure that out.

SACGHS Meeting Transcript  
July 8, 2008

But, thank you, all of you, especially Rick and Steve, but all of you for the wonderful friendships I have been able to make, the colleagues I have enjoyed working with over these years, and the accomplishments that together we have managed to do. It has been pretty amazing, pretty breathtaking. There is much more to come. Thank you all so much.

[Applause.]

DR. TEUTSCH: Thank you so much, Francis. Thanks, Rick.