

# Funding in Europe: How the Big Three Cope

*If you ask where the money for European cancer research comes from, you're in for some surprises*

London—IN THE UNITED STATES THESE days, cancer researchers are chafing under what they perceive as shrinking federal research funds. But their European counterparts would not complain about the National Cancer Institute's \$1.5-billion-a-year budget: They have never benefited from comparable government largess. Instead, they have looked for ways to keep their own research on the cutting edge that would often surprise their American colleagues.

Britain's Imperial Cancer Research Fund (ICRF) provides a fine example. With 1200 scientists it is one of Europe's largest research institutions and its director general, Sir Walter Bodmer, also heads the Human Genome Organization. ICRF is well known throughout the world, but if you're not British there is one thing you probably don't know: Sir Walter and his colleagues owe their research funds not to the government but to a Mrs. Frances Gudge, and colleagues, who sell second-hand clothes in small shops up and down the highways and byways of Great Britain.

Mrs. Gudge, who is 65 years old and has had 10 children, says she loves life. That's why she works without salary in a shop down London's West End Lane, along with some half-dozen other volunteers, mostly energetic ladies in their 70s and 80s. They take in donations of second-hand clothes from local people, sort them, even wash and iron them at home when necessary, and then re-sell them. The shop offers good value—a good-as-new cotton shirt goes for around \$6—and all the money goes to ICRF's cancer research. "Cancer is a horrendous disease—it doesn't just destroy people but the families they leave behind—it's very urgent to collect money for research and get to the root of it," Mrs. Gudge says.

It's that view that fuels cancer research in both Britain and France. Astonishing though it may seem to U.S. cancer researchers, who

get most of their funds from the government, British oncologists rely on bequests, largely houses from people who die of cancer, and the income from 650 second-hand clothes shops run by the ICRF and a parallel organization, the Cancer Research Campaign, to raise the lion's share—\$150 million per year—of their research funds. Support from the government comes in a distant second (see figure) with the government-funded Medical Research Council putting up just \$12 million annually.

In France, it's not quite chic to buy second-hand clothes and Jacques Croze-  
marie (see page 1119), founder of the Asso-

throughout the country and has helped fund close to 2500 French researchers over the past 5 years. Indeed, its influence has become so wide that one government agency expressed concern that French cancer researchers had become too dependent on ARC and were afraid to criticize its policies publicly.

The down side for all of Europe's charities is that their worst nightmare—a sudden slump in income—can come true all too easily. There is fierce competition for charity pounds and francs, and fluctuations in house prices can massively alter the value of bequests. ICRF had its fingers burned earlier this year when several years of vigorous expansion ran into the realities of Britain's economic recession. The fund has had to put a freeze on new appointments and may even have to cut 250 jobs over the next few years.

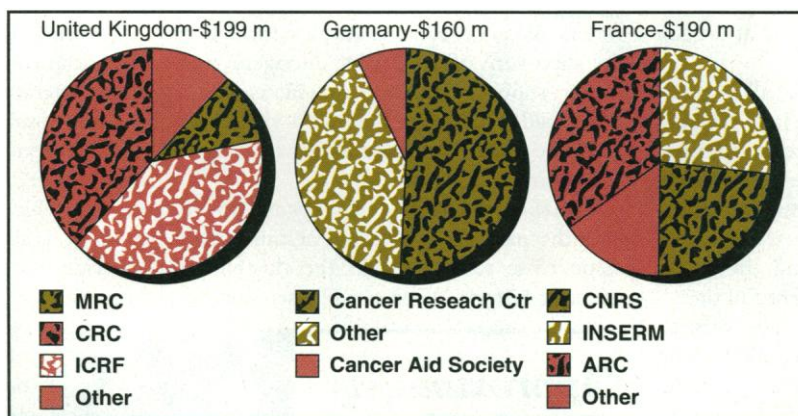
Among the big three biomedical research nations in Europe, only Germany is free from such worries—and that, sadly, is because Germany has little tradition of charitable support for cancer research. Although the German government provides \$150 million for cancer

research—more than either the British or French governments—without people power the total budget is still significantly smaller than those of the other two nations.

"Tax laws in Germany work against donations to charitable foundations," says Achim Ebert, director of the German Cancer Aid Society, Germany's biggest cancer charity. Parliamentarians have been promising for years to change a law that restricts corporate dona-

tions to foundations. "Basic research would benefit from a change in the law," says Sabine von Kleist, director of the Institute for Immune Biology at the University of Freiburg, "but I am not optimistic that it will be made soon because the parliament's priorities have shifted due to reunification."

Reunification, with its promise of higher taxes, is already hitting charitable donations from individuals. "Compassion fatigue" is affecting German Cancer Aid's ability to support worthy projects in cancer research, says Ebert. In a time of hardship, German foundations perhaps ought to take a leaf out of Britain's book. Both ICRF and the Cancer Research Campaign find their shops are very important in buffering sharp shocks to their income. When the economy is down they can count on second-hand clothes to sell better than ever! ■ ALUN ANDERSON



**Slicing the pie.** Government funding is in green; charity funds in rose.

ciation for Research on Cancer (ARC), relies instead on direct mail and television appeals. Again the public is generous; charitable expenditures on cancer research run at \$100 million per year, a little more than the \$96 million total of government funds.

Living on charity has its advantages and disadvantages. On the up side, researchers have the freedom to run their research programs exactly the way they want. ICRF, for example, chooses not to advertise any research grants. "If we want to be in a particular field we try to identify the person of highest promise and distinction and make an offer he or she can't refuse," says Nicholas Wright, director of clinical research at ICRF. The result, he says, is that "we can build a research portfolio of unequalled high quality."

France's ARC chooses quite a different approach: It spreads its money widely