Use of Racially Targeted Drug Therapy Questioned

WASHINGTON — Drugs like BiDil that target a particular racial or ethnic group do not represent the best approach for looking at health disparities, Dr. Francis S. Collins said at a meeting sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Minority Health.

"It is a good thing that we have a drug that treats individuals with congestive heart failure and clearly improves their survival," said Dr. Collins, director of the National Human Genome Research Institute, in Bethesda, Md. "But are we sure that this came about in a way that actually makes the most sense? Are we sure this drug will be beneficial to other groups?"

Although the original clinical trial for BiDil (fixed-dose isosorbide dinitrate and hydralazine) appeared to show that only African Americans clearly benefit from the drug, "it was a relatively modest-sized study, and there could have been some benefit in others," Dr. Collins said. "Are we sure that this has anything to do with being African American, or could it be that since Africans just prove the fact that "we white people evolved from their starting point as black people," he said.

Most of the variation in the human genome over the last 100,000 years "relates to the ways in which those genes were spread as those people migrated out of Africa to other parts of the world," he said.

And while genomes may vary from group to group, "it's not as well for heart failure from coronary artery disease, which is perhaps more common in other groups?" Dr. Collins noted.

"But are we sure that this drug that only works for them," said Dr. Collins. "Another problem with separating people into races is that the genetic makeup of all humans is actually quite similar, said Dr. Collins, who leads the Human Genome Project.

"We are much more alike ... than most other species on the planet. There's more diversity in a small group of chimpanzees living on one hillside than there is in the entire human race, because we're so new on the scene."

Most of the variation in the human genome over the last 100,000 years "relates to the ways in which those genes were spread as those people migrated out of Africa to other parts of the world," he said.

And while genomes may vary from group to group, "it's not as well for heart failure from coronary artery disease, which is perhaps more common in other groups?" Dr. Collins said.

"But are we sure that this drug that only works for them," said Dr. Collins. "Another problem with separating people into races is that the genetic makeup of all humans is actually quite similar, said Dr. Collins, who leads the Human Genome Project.

"We are much more alike ... than most other species on the planet. There's more diversity in a small group of chimpanzees living on one hillside than there is in the entire human race, because we're so new on the scene."

Most of the variation in the human genome over the last 100,000 years "relates to the ways in which those genes were spread as those people migrated out of Africa to other parts of the world," he said.

And while genomes may vary from group to group, "it's not as well for heart failure from coronary artery disease, which is perhaps more common in other groups?" Dr. Collins said.

"But are we sure that this drug that only works for them," said Dr. Collins. "Another problem with separating people into races is that the genetic makeup of all humans is actually quite similar, said Dr. Collins, who leads the Human Genome Project.

"We are much more alike ... than most other species on the planet. There's more diversity in a small group of chimpanzees living on one hillside than there is in the entire human race, because we're so new on the scene."

Most of the variation in the human genome over the last 100,000 years "relates to the ways in which those genes were spread as those people migrated out of Africa to other parts of the world," he said.

And while genomes may vary from group to group, "it's not as well for heart failure from coronary artery disease, which is perhaps more common in other groups?" Dr. Collins said.

"But are we sure that this drug that only works for them," said Dr. Collins. "Another problem with separating people into races is that the genetic makeup of all humans is actually quite similar, said Dr. Collins, who leads the Human Genome Project.

"We are much more alike ... than most other species on the planet. There's more diversity in a small group of chimpanzees living on one hillside than there is in the entire human race, because we're so new on the scene."

Most of the variation in the human genome over the last 100,000 years "relates to the ways in which those genes were spread as those people migrated out of Africa to other parts of the world," he said.