The Future

This brief account of selected accomplishments over the 40-year program of energy-related health and environmental research only partially illustrates its role in fulfilling an important national need. Use of this style of presentation makes it difficult to convey the program's most important characteristics: an evolutionary, integrated, and multidisciplinary research commitment; a synergism between fundamental science and applied problem solving; and an inevitable share of scientific setbacks as well as achievements. Thus the accomplishments in reality represent a continuum of scientific development—from the basic unraveling of bioenvironmental processes and the coupling of seemingly disparate facts to their application to specific problems.

These program characteristics, in turn, lend a distinct characteristic to the research itself: it is built continually upon an established base of knowledge, the rewards becoming increasingly apparent far downstream of the initial thought and investment. Thus, to a large extent, the program's future accomplishments are already embedded in its studies of the past and the present.

As a part of the evolving national energy mission, a responsive research program has developed the expertise and facilities required for its newer roles. The evolution continues, centered around a long-term commitment to fundamental and basic research, toward addressing problems and issues of a high-risk nature with an anticipatory rather than a regulatory approach. Of particular importance to the future is the fact that the program's multidisciplinary talent and capabilities in unique, dedicated facilities constitute a valuable national resource.

The research program is therefore as well equipped to meet future challenges as it was to meet past challenges. As our energy mission continues to evolve, with changing patterns of energy demand and the accompanying development of