Leaders of the U.S. Congress expect to pass a continuing resolution in September to fund the federal government at current levels through March, avoiding a possible government shutdown before the fall election. The agreement does not affect the automatic budget cuts ("sequestration") scheduled to arrive in January if suitable measures are not taken to reduce the federal deficit. The cuts would be expected to take $2.4 billion out of the NIH budget.

For $3 billion in cash, GlaxoSmithKline will buy Human Genome Sciences (HGS) of Rockville, MD. Among its cancer projects, HGS is running a randomized phase II trial of mapatumumab with sorafenib (Nexavar; Onyx Pharmaceuticals and Bayer Healthcare Pharmaceuticals) in advanced hepatocellular cancer.

The American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) is creating a breast cancer–specific prototype for CancerLinQ, the society’s initiative for a rapid learning system in cancer care. CancerLinQ is designed to assemble and analyze millions of unconnected medical records in a central knowledge base. Among its benefits, CancerLinQ will let investigators explore clinical data in unprecedented ways and generate research hypotheses, according to ASCO.

Dendreon of Seattle, maker of the prostate cancer immunotherapy treatment Provenge (sipuleucel-T), has cut 600 jobs and will close 1 of its 3 manufacturing sites, as it seeks to reduce its annual costs by about $150 million.

The NIH is expanding access to the NIH Clinical Center in Bethesda, MD, to extramural researchers. The nation’s largest hospital devoted entirely to clinical research, the center until now exclusively served the agency’s intramural research program. A new grant program, Opportunities for Collaborative Research at the NIH Clinical Center, will support partnerships with outside researchers.

Global spending on oncology drugs will reach at least $93 billion in 2016, making this the largest category among total drug spending, which will near $1.2 trillion that year, predicts a report from the IMS Institute for Healthcare Informatics of Parsippany, NJ.

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