were more than 30 panels, and the event drew more than 500 attendees, who paid $145 for admittance and $200 for an evening cocktail party and keynote address by former FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg.

Some of the luminaries among the 43 speakers were Dr. Siddhartha Mukherjee, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting and author of The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer; Dr. Harold Varmus, Nobel Prize Laureate and former director of the National Cancer Institute; Dr. Edward Benz, President and CEO of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute; Dr. Margaret Hamburg, former Commissioner of the FDA, and Dr. Barbara McAneny, President-Elect of the American Medical Association.

The conference was divided into five panels that explored how government and law affect cancer research and patient care through policies, budgets, and regulations. The first panel, moderated by Ms. Gluck, posed the question, “Is the Federal Government a Productive Partner in Cancer Policy?”

The answer was generally yes, with many qualifications. Erik Fatemi, from the lobbying group Cornerstone Government Affairs, noted that the all-important budget of the NIH, unlike most agency budgets, has historically been treated as nearly sacrosanct by both political parties, partly because it isn’t fractured by earmarks for specific diseases. Dr. Hamburg warned that America’s preeminent role in biomedical research could slip—China now has the world’s largest gene sequencers and almost half of all clinical trials registered on ClinicalTrials.gov are being conducted overseas.

The second panel, entitled “The Business of Cancer,” may have been the most enlightening for many attendees. “Everybody was blown away by that panel,” said Ms. Gluck, “because most of the people involved with cancer every day never have the opportunity to stand back and think about the business model.” The six people on the panel were extremely open about what they get paid for and what they don’t get paid for. For example, Dr. Benz said that 40 percent of Dana-Farber’s business is conducted overseas.

In the third panel, entitled “Cancer, Health Justice, and Disparities,” an associate professor of medicine at the University of Chicago Medicine, Dr. Blase Polite, excited the audience with data that showed how Chicago, New York City, and Delaware virtually eliminated racial disparities for certain cancers through focused public health campaigns.

The fourth panel, “Drug Development and the Cost of Researching and Treating Cancer,” was moderated by Charles Fuchs, MD, MPH, Director of Yale Cancer Center and Physician-in-Chief of Smilow Cancer Hospital. He began by saying that after listening to Polite’s talk, he wanted Yale to choose a cancer and work to eliminate the disparities in treating it. Panelists pointed out that the traditional path of drug development, in which the high cost of producing a new drug could be recouped by dominating a market for years, has been shattered. Now an exclusive new drug may be replaced within a few years, or become part of a combination therapy, changes that alter pharma’s R&D (Research & Development) equation.

The conference’s final panel addressed the legal and policy issues associated with cutting-edge cancer treatments. The discussion centered on big data and patient privacy. Massive databases that collect information about patients’ cancer types, genomic sequences, and mutations have played crucial roles in advancing cancer research. But these databases depend on procedures and chemotherapy. Two panelists mentioned that many doctors have no idea about the price of drugs, and when given information about comparable drugs that cost 10 to 40 times less, they’re amazed. Abe Lopman, MBA, Senior Vice President of Operations and Executive Director of Smilow Cancer Hospital, shared the information—new to many in the audience—that for every dollar Smilow spends serving a Medicaid patient, the state reimburses just 30 cents. For a Medicare patient, the federal government reimburses 80 cents. For patients with private insurance, Smilow recaptures $1.20 per dollar spent.

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Some of the luminaries among the 43 speakers were Dr. Siddhartha Mukherjee, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer, who gave a keynote address about reframing the way we think about cancer; Dr. Norman Sharpless, Director of the National Cancer Institute, whose keynote addressed who gave a keynote address about reframing the way we think about cancer; Dr. Harold Varmus, Nobel Prize Laureate, former Director of the National Cancer Institute and the National Institutes of Health, and former President and CEO of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center; Dr. Edward J. Benz, President and CEO Emeritus of Dana-Farber Cancer Institute; Dr. Margaret Hamburg, former Commissioner of the FDA, and Dr. Barbara McAneny, President-Elect of the American Medical Association.

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