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FASEB and AAMC Statement on Health Benefits for Postdoctoral Researchers

The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) and the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) strongly believe that every effort must be made to recruit and retain talented scientists to the biomedical research enterprise. It is critical, therefore, that our nation's young investigators view science as an attractive and viable career option that offers postdoctoral researchers compensation commensurate with their education, experience, and contribution to the research enterprise. Access to affordable health care is an essential component of this support.

Many institutions have found it difficult to provide the same health benefits to all postdocs because of their differential classification as "employees" or "non-employees" according to the source of funding for their position. Employee postdocs may have access to the same benefits plans as other employees at their institution, while non-employee postdocs may not. Indeed, non-employee postdocs may be limited to inferior plans or no plan at all. This system not only limits their access to adequate health coverage, but it creates inequity among postdocs within and across institutions even though they have the same level of expertise and perform the same type of work.

Rectifying this situation requires action by both training and funding institutions. Universities and other training institutions must provide the same benefits to all postdocs regardless of their funding source. Training program administrators are encouraged to look toward institutions such as the University of California and Case Western Reserve University as models for the successful implementation of these plans.

For their part, funding institutions must provide non-employee postdocs with the financial resources to purchase comprehensive health benefits packages that are on par with those offered to employee postdocs. FASEB and AAMC appreciate the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) commitment to the health of trainees, including their recent decision to modify the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) policy by making health benefits an allowable cost within the Training Related Expenses and Institutional Allowance categories of the institutional and individual NRSA fellowships. We urge NIH to sustain this commitment by ensuring the additional funding to these categories is sufficient to cover the cost of health benefits.

As leading advocates for research and training in the biomedical sciences, FASEB and AAMC strongly believe that postdoctoral researchers must have funding for and access to comprehensive health care coverage. By working together to provide these critical benefits, funding and training institutions can enhance the attractiveness of careers in biomedical research.

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