

BLOCK 4 OF INSTRUCTION: Medical Research Funding

OVERVIEW: Medical research is funded by various entities, sometimes at various stages of the research, and sometimes by those entities all at once. This block discusses the complex funding mechanisms that allow for this important work.

OBJECTIVES:

- Discuss federal funding sources of medical research conducted at research institutions, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers, medical schools, and teaching hospitals.
- Discuss other sources of funding, including industry, foundations, disease-specific groups, and others.

SUGGESTED PRESENTERS:

- Dean of research
- Medical researchers or faculty
- Representative from affiliated VA medical center
- Industry representative
- Institutional grant manager or liaison

SUGGESTED TIME: 1 hour

KEY TOPICS:

- Describe how medical research is funded.
 - Much of medical research is funded through the National Institutes of Health (NIH), a federal agency within the Department of Health and Human Services.
 - Describe how much of NIH-funded medical research does not occur at its Bethesda headquarters, but at teaching hospitals and medical schools throughout the nation. Half of all external research funded by the NIH is performed by scientists at medical schools and teaching hospitals.
 - Discuss various funding mechanisms and what types of research the NIH funds.
 - Discuss the difference between direct costs and facilities and administration (F&A) or indirect costs, and why F&A costs are needed.
 - Discuss research conducted at your institution funded by the NIH.
 - Other research is funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs or other federal agencies.
 - Discuss research at your institution or affiliated VA medical center that is funded by the Department of Veterans Affairs.
 - Discuss research at your institution funded by other federal agencies.

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- Research can also be funded by industry or other groups.
 - Discuss research funded by industry or outside, nongovernmental groups.
 - Discuss the unique role of NIH funding versus private or industry funding.
 - Discuss how your institution manages conflicts of interest, especially with regard to industry funded research.
- Discuss costs that are not covered by the NIH, VA, other agencies, or industry.
- Discuss institutional costs of supporting early career investigators and researchers in between external grants (bridge funding).
- Discuss the timeline for going from bench to bedside to community and how and where government funding occurs.
- Discuss the role of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in medical research and drug development.

ACTIVITIES:

- Give an introductory presentation about the history of NIH-funded medical research and current funding issues. Place special emphasis on how federal budget cuts have limited research opportunities at your institution.
- Discuss the process of applying for an NIH grant and show how competition has increased with the decrease of federal funds. Give participants their “NIH Grant Award Letters.”
- If your institution has a relationship with an area VA hospital, take a tour of that facility and show how this partnership is leading to cures and improving veteran care. Talk with veterans and showcase veteran-focused research.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Encourage presenters to interact with participants. Make this a dynamic discussion, rather than a one-way flow of communication. Set this tone for the day early in the program by telling participants that you want the day to be a dialogue and inviting them to interrupt presenters to ask questions. Always attempt to make presentations more hands-on.
- When recruiting presenters, select those who have a history of effective communication with lay audiences. Most PME participants come from a background with little knowledge of medical science. Presenters should not assume that the audience has knowledge of basic medical concepts. Stay away from medical jargon. Coach presenters prior to the event and encourage them to be mindful of their audience when presenting.

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- Describe the challenges in securing funding for this complex process and the necessity of forming research partnerships with private-sector businesses, as well as describing conflict-of-interest policies.