



THE AD HOC GROUP FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Ad Hoc Group Weekly COVID-19 Follow Up

August 13, 2020

The Ad Hoc Follow Up will be on a temporary hiatus for the remainder of August and early September. Please forward any relevant items for inclusion in the Ad Hoc Round Up, published on Mondays, to Christa Wagner (chwagner@aamc.org) for inclusion in the publication!

Congressional and NIH News

New Treatments Spur Sharp Reduction in Lung Cancer Mortality Rate

Mortality rates in American men from the most common form of lung cancer decreased by more than 6% from 2013 to 2016 according to a recently published National Cancer Institute (NCI)-funded study summarized in an [August 12 NIH news release](#). The authors attribute the decreased death rates to decreased tobacco use as well as targeted lung cancer therapies. “The survival benefit for patients with non-small cell lung cancer treated with targeted therapies has been demonstrated in clinical trials, but this study highlights the impact of these treatments at the population level,” said Nadia Howlader, Ph.D., of NCI’s Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences, who led the study. “We can now see the impact of advances in lung cancer treatment on survival.”

NIH Names New NIAMS Director

The NIH on August 6 [announced the selection of Lindsey Criswell, MD, MPH, DSc](#) to be the next director of the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Diseases (NIAMS). Dr. Criswell currently serves as the vice chancellor of research at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). She is a professor of rheumatology in UCSF’s Department of Medicine, as well as a professor of orofacial sciences in its School of Dentistry. NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, noted, “Dr. Criswell has rich experience as a clinician, researcher and administrator. Her ability to oversee the research program of one of the country’s top research-intensive medical schools, and her expertise in autoimmune diseases, including rheumatoid arthritis and lupus, make her well-positioned to direct NIAMS.” Dr. Criswell is expected to begin her new role in early 2021.

Addressing the Twin Challenges of Substance Use Disorders and COVID-19

NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, recently [hosted a video conference with National Institute of Drug Abuse \(NIDA\) Director Nora Volkow, MD](#), to discuss increased rates of suspected drug overdoses in 2020 compared to 2019 and what NIH-funded research is doing to help. The NIH leaders discussed how the opioid crisis has become a larger public health crisis due to the coronavirus pandemic, in part due to challenges with isolation from

stay-at-home orders and trouble in accessing methadone clinics. Dr. Volkow also discussed the disproportionate risk of those with substance use disorders of contracting COVID-19, and concerns about treatment and infections in criminal justice settings.

Institute and Center Award Rates and Funding Disparities

NIH Director of Extramural Research Michael Lauer, MD, authored an [August 12 Open Mike blog post](#) following up on recent discussions regarding lower award rates for African American and Black applicants, specifically a 2019 study reporting that African American and Black applicants “are more likely to propose research on topics that are less likely to be funded.” Following additional analysis, Dr. Lauer reported that African American and Black applicants sent more applications to NIH institutes and centers with lower award rates and that those differential award rates “were critical drivers of differences in funding outcomes for applications linked to different topics.” Dr. Lauer also noted that institutes and centers which received a greater proportion of applications in topics to which African American and Black researchers disproportionately apply had lower award rates.

Recognition of Research Participants’ Need for Autonomy

NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD and Associate Director for Science Policy Carrie Wolinetz, PhD, co-authored an [August 11 Viewpoint](#) in the Journal of the American Medical Association recognizing the injustices faced by Henrietta Lacks, the Black woman whose cervical cancer cells were harvested without her consent and used to create the ubiquitous HeLa cell line, her family, and addressing the role of medical research in bringing change. Drs. Collins and Wolinetz urge concrete action on a biospecimen consent policy, stating, “Solving the issues of inequities in clinical research and, ultimately, in health care and medicine is going to require the recognition and remediation of systemic racism throughout the enterprise. It will not be a simple undertaking: it will require a commitment to substantive change, disruption of the status quo, and a willingness to admit complicity in an unjust system.”

Temporary Extension of Eligibility for the NIH K99/R00 Award

The NIH Office of Extramural Research [posted on August 12](#) about a new [guide notice](#) providing up to a two-receipt cycle extension of eligibility for prospective applicants to the K99/R00 applications as a result of COVID-19 disruptions. The new extension allows for approximately eight additional months of eligibility.

Ad Hoc Member Resources

AAMC Releases Guidance on Mask Usage

The AAMC has compiled the [latest scientific information on mask usage](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), state and local governments, and public health experts into one commonsense, scientific approach to face coverings for the public to help prevent and lower the transmission of the coronavirus. This national guidance, [The Way Forward on COVID-19: Consensus Guidance on Face Coverings](#) from the AAMC Research and Action Institute, builds on the AAMC’s [recently released road map](#) to reset the nation’s response to the pandemic.

COVID-19 - Back to Campus: A Course on COVID-19 Safety

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) has collaborated with member institutions and CITI Program to [launch a complimentary course to train research faculty and team members, research staff, students, and other staff at medical schools and research organizations on COVID-19 safety](#) as they return to campus this fall. The highlights of the course include a discussion of recommendations from NIH, CDC, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, as well as optional modules on specific research areas. Organizations may subscribe to this free course by October 1, and learners will receive a CITI Program completion report as evidence of successful training. [Download a demo and learn more about the course here.](#)

Upcoming Events

Inclusion Across the Lifespan Workshop – September 2

NIH is hosting the second in a series of Inclusion Across the Lifespan workshops to provide lessons learned regarding the inclusion of pediatric and older populations in clinical studies, with evidence-based practical advice to the scientific community. The workshop will bring together individuals with a variety of backgrounds in clinical study development and execution, with focus on pediatric and geriatric populations, and consideration of special populations across the life course. The workshop will take place on Wednesday, September 2, from 10:30am – 5:30pm EST. [Please register in advance.](#)

Virtual Rally for Medical Research – Sept. 16-17

The Rally for Medical Research is held every September and includes more than 300 national organizations coming together in support of to call on our nation's policymakers to make funding for National Institutes of Health (NIH) a national priority and raise awareness about the importance of continued investment in medical research that leads to more progress, more hope, and more lives saved. This year's event will be held virtually on September 16-17. For more information and to register, please visit <https://rallyformedicalresearch.org>.

Virtual NIH Regional Seminar – October 27-30

NIH is making plans for a [virtual regional seminar](#) on program funding and grants administration this fall. The event will take place from October 27-30. The agenda is currently under development, but a sample of potential sessions can be [found here](#). Registration details will be on the [Regional Seminars website](#) when available.

NIH COVID-19 Resources

[NIH COVID-19 resource for applicants and grantees](#) including guidance for various aspects of research and grant application processes, as well as FAQs and COVID-19 funding opportunities.

[COVID-19 “Updates History” webpage](#) that details relevant updates for applicants and grantees by date.

[FAQ document on COVID-19 flexibilities](#) related to policies and programs affecting the grants process.

[Funding opportunities specific to COVID-19](#) lists active and expired funding opportunities across NIH related to SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 research.

[HHS COVID-19 awards tracking website](#) including data on awards made by all HHS awarding agencies with supplemental appropriations.

Job Postings

ASM Seeks a Regulatory Affairs Specialist

The American Society for Microbiology (ASM)'s Policy and Advocacy Department seeks an experienced Regulatory Affairs Specialist to strengthen its presence with federal agencies, specifically CMS and FDA, and proactively identify opportunities for ASM federal policy engagement on clinical and regulatory matters. This person will monitor, analyze, and report on regulatory activity that has the potential to affect the microbial sciences and clinical microbiology community in assigned policy areas, and work with ASM members and staff to develop position statements, testimony, and regulatory comments. View the full job description and [apply here](#). For more information about ASM, go to: www.asm.org

Please Note: *If you have information of interest to the NIH advocacy community that you would like to share with the Ad Hoc Group, please forward it to Christa Wagner at chwagner@aamc.org or Tannaz Rasouli at trasouli@aamc.org.*