Ad Hoc Group Weekly COVID-19 Follow Up
January 7, 2021

In this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will be publishing an additional weekly update focused on COVID-19 to highlight related NIH actions and guidance as well as activities from the Ad Hoc Group community and general updates. As always, please forward any relevant items to Christa Wagner (chwagner@aamc.org) for inclusion in the publication!

Congressional and NIH News

Appropriations Chair DeLauro Addresses Colleagues on Work Ahead

Newly elected House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) sent a “dear colleague” letter to colleagues in the House of Representatives on January 5. “I will be relying heavily on the informed work of my Appropriations subcommittee chairs, as well as working closely with the authorizing chairs and their committee Members and our Democratic caucuses. Ultimate success for our country will also demand thoughtful cooperation with the Republican leaders in the House and Senate,” DeLauro stated. Full letter available from Politico (subscription required).

COVID-19 Treatment Push Prompts Calls for Faster Public Trial Data

Former federal agency officials are publicly urging the Department of Health and Human Services and the NIH to require COVID-19 clinical trials results to be posted on ClinicalTrials.gov within a month of study completion, reported BGOV on January 6 (subscription required). “The pandemic compresses the time frame [for posting results] radically because people are dying in large numbers. Those designing new trials should have access to everything else that’s been done as quickly as possible,” argued Robert M. Califf, MD, former commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration. Valerie H. Bonham, JD, former NIH official agreed about the “very real benefits of clinicaltrials.gov information sharing,” but noted concern about the short 30-day window in creating potential quality control concerns.

Large Clinical Trial Will Test Combination Monoclonal Antibody Therapy for Mild/Moderate COVID-19

A new Phase 2/3 clinical trial sponsored by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) is investigating the safety and efficacy of a new monoclonal antibody therapy in COVID-19 patients with mild to moderate disease, according to a January 5 NIH news release. The monoclonal antibodies work to bind to the SARS-CoV-2 virus, preventing the virus from infecting a patient’s cells. The trial’s objective is to determine if the therapy “prevents either hospitalization or death by 28 days after study entry.”

DNA-Editing Method Shows Promise to Treat Mouse Model of Progeria
Recent research findings show that the DNA-editing technique base editing has been used to extend the lifespan of mice with the genetic premature aging disorder progeria, as reported in a January 6 NIH news release. Progeria impacts 1 in 4 million children, causes health issues in childhood and adolescence normally associated with aging leading to a life expectancy of about 13 years, and is caused by a single DNA base change in the nuclear lamin A gene. "The fact that a single specific mutation causes the disease in nearly all affected children made us realize that we might have tools to fix the root cause. These tools could only be developed thanks to long-term investments in basic genomics research," stated NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, who coauthored the findings. The story is also covered in STAT.

Explore RePORTER's State Map Visualizations

The NIH Office of Extramural Research published a January 6 blog post highlighting the new RePORTER website, including a new map visualization showing NIH projects by state. Results can be filtered to show NIH funding by Congressional district, principal investigator, institution, fiscal year, or NIH Institute or Center providing the funding.

Upcoming Events

Apply for HIV Clinical Training Opportunities – January 19, 2021

The HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) and the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) Foundation are accepting applications for the 2021 HIV Clinical Fellowship Program. For the first time, the program is supporting one year of HIV clinical training for full or half-time effort awards to allow greater flexibility for physicians to train in community-based settings. The award supports a stipend of $33,000 for half-time training or $65,000 for full-time, plus funding to cover fringe benefits. Physicians whose communities are underrepresented in medicine or who interested in working in the Southeastern United States are strongly encouraged to apply. Program and application requirements are on the HIVMA website, including recommended competencies for HIVMA Clinical Fellows. The deadline to apply is Jan. 19, 2021. For more information, please email HIVMA.

Apply for Medical Student HIV, Infectious Diseases Research Grants – February 5

The Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) Foundation and HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) seek applications for the G.E.R.M (Grants for Emerging Researchers/Clinicians Mentorship) Program for the 2021-2022 cycle. The program provides grants to medical students to support a mentored clinical learning and/or research project for up to a year, on infectious diseases and HIV related topics under the mentorship of an IDSA or HIVMA member. Applicants must be medical students (first, second or third year) from an accredited allopathic or osteopathic medical school in the U.S. Application information is available from the IDSA Foundation website. Awardees receive a $4,000 stipend to complete their project. The deadline to apply is February 5, 2021. Please email HIVMA staff with questions.

SOBC Capstone Conference – February 22-23
This capstone research conference will celebrate ten years of the NIH Science of Behavior Change (SOBC) Common Fund Program. The goal of the SOBC program is to advance behavior change research through a focus on mechanisms of change and the integration of basic research with applied/interventional research. The capstone conference will highlight innovative examples of behavior change research consistent with SOBC principles, from use-inspired basic research to mechanisms-focused intervention science. The capstone conference on February 22-23 will be virtual, open to the public, recorded, archived, and proceedings summarized in a publicly accessible report. The agenda, speaker information, and a link to registration will be available on this website in the coming months.

Apply for the Sarcoidosis Research Fellowship Grant – February 26

Applications for 2021-2023 Foundation for Sarcoidosis Research's Fellowship Grant in the amount of $75,000 per year per fellow are due February 26. Additional details and a link to apply are on the Foundation for Sarcoidosis Research website.

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.

Combat COVID website including information for those who have never had COVID-19, have been infected, have recovered, and for health care providers.

Job Postings

AAMC Seeks Senior Science Policy Analyst

The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) seeks a Sr. Science Policy Specialist, to work closely with leadership in the Scientific Affairs team to provide up-to-date information on policy developments affecting biomedical research at member medical schools and teaching hospitals, prepare presentations and communications, and assist in the development of positions and responses to federal requests, especially on National
Institutes of Health (NIH) matters. Key issue areas include medical/clinical research infrastructure, training and workforce development and on the issues promoting diversity and combatting sexual harassment in the STEMM workforce. Please visit the full job post for more information and to apply.

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.