Ad Hoc Group Weekly COVID-19 Follow Up  
January 21, 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

Collins to Continue as NIH Director, Biden Names Additional Science Advisers

President Joe Biden announced that NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, will continue his appointment as NIH Director in a January 15 press release. In a press statement, the Ad Hoc Group applauded Biden's decision to extend Collins' appointment noting, “Since his initial appointment in 2009, Dr. Collins has been an ardent advocate for biomedical research and continues to inspire young scientists to pursue a career in research.” Biden also announced the nomination of Eric Lander, PhD, as director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, who would be the first life scientist to serve in this role. This will be a Cabinet-level position in the Biden Administration, as detailed in the Washington Post.

Biden Outlines Plans for Rescue, Relief COVID-19 Packages

President-elect Joe Biden announced a $1.9 trillion “American Rescue Plan” on January 14, including proposing additional resources to combat the COVID-19 pandemic including to increase SARS-CoV-2 sequencing, surveillance, and outbreak analytics capacities to quickly identify new strains, and to support development, manufacturing, and purchase of COVID-19 therapeutics. CQ reported on January 20 that Congressional Democrats are beginning to discuss moving the rescue package without Republican support through the budget reconciliation process if a bipartisan deal cannot be negotiated (subscription required). In prepared remarks, Biden previewed a second relief package that will include proposed investments in research and development, expected to be revealed in February.

NIH Director’s Blog: Trying to Make Sense of Long COVID Syndrome

NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, reviewed a pre-print of a study compiled from survey responses from people experiencing “Long COVID syndrome” in a January 19 blog post. The study details over 200 symptoms in more than 3,700 participants in the United States, noting that nearly half of respondents could not work full time six months after developing COVID-19, and 88% noted continued cognitive issues or memory loss. “The findings show that—even in those people who don’t require hospitalization for severe COVID-19—the condition’s prolonged symptoms are having a major impact on lives and livelihoods, both here and around the world. While the number of people affected isn't yet
known, if even a small proportion of the vast numbers of people infected with COVID-19 develop Long COVID syndrome, it represents a significant public health concern,” Collins noted.

**Open Mike: NIH’s New COVID-19 Research Website**

NIH launched a new COVID-19 website, providing a centralized repository for “trusted, up-to-date, accurate information about NIH research and our strategic role in COVID-19 research,” according to NIH Deputy Director for Extramural Research Michael Lauer, MD, in a January 19 blog post. The new site includes information about key programs such as the Accelerating COVID-19 Therapeutic Interventions and Vaccines public-private partnership and the Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics initiative to develop state-of-the-science diagnostic tests for COVID-19. Users are also able to search information on funded research by state, institution, Congressional district, and more.

**The Cancer Moonshot: A Midpoint Progress Update**

National Cancer Institute Director Norman “Ned” Sharpless, MD, and Dinah Singer, PhD, NCI deputy director for scientific strategy and development, coauthored a January 11 blog post providing an update on four years of the Cancer Moonshot. Sharpless and Singer noted that NCI has invested nearly $1 billion in Moonshot funding, supporting over 240 research projects across more than 70 cancer science initiatives. The blog covered several areas of focus, including improving immunotherapy, childhood cancers, tumor atlases, cancer prevention and early detection, engaging with patients, greater collaboration, and enhanced data sharing.

**Upcoming Events**

**FASEB Webinar: Careers Beyond Academia – January 28**

The Federation of American Societies of Experimental Biology (FASEB) is hosting a webinar on January 28 from 2-3 pm EST on scientific careers beyond academia. Speakers from the National Academies, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill will discuss ideas on how institutions and PIs can better support trainees seeking non-academic career paths. Please visit the webinar series website for additional information and to register.

**NIH Council of Councils – January 29**

The NIH Council of Councils is scheduled to meet virtually on January 29, with the meeting open to the public from 11:00am until 5:00pm EST. The meeting will be accessible at videocast.nih.gov. Please see the Federal Register notice and Council of Councils meeting website for additional information.

**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.

NEW NIH COVID-19 Research Website provides a central location for trusted, up-to-date, accurate information about NIH research and our strategic role in 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.

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**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.