Ad Hoc Group Weekly Round Up
January 25, 2021

Each week, the Ad Hoc Group Weekly Round Up will feature hashtags and/or tweets (follow us at @fundNIH) suggested by members of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) advocacy community. We encourage all readers who are active on social media to use these messages, and we welcome suggestions from the community for future issues of the Weekly Round Up. Here is this week’s featured tweet:

Association of American Universities @AAUniversities – January 25
Multipronged @BU_Tweets research team finds 18 FDA-approved drugs that could halt #coronavirus infection earlier: https://www.aau.edu/research-scholarship/featured-research-topics/how-coronavirus-damages-lung-cells-within-mer...-

Discussions Begin on Next COVID Relief Package
President Biden’s Director of the National Economic Council, Brian Deese, has begun discussions with 16 bipartisan Senators to garner support for the president’s $1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief proposal, according to BGOV on January 25 (subscription required). Reports indicate that administration officials will continue listening to bipartisan lawmakers’ concerns, with many opposing the proposal’s large price tag, while working to move the package forward quickly.

Biden Signs Executive Orders on COVID-19
President Biden signed several executive orders on January 20 and 21 related to the administration’s COVID-19 relief proposal to immediately address the coronavirus pandemic. Included in the executive actions was an executive order to improve and expand access to COVID-19 care and treatments, with a requirement for the NIH to identify clinical management protocols and novel therapeutics for COVID-19 patients, and to develop plans to support new research in rural locations, on long-term COVID-19 health impacts, and to consider increased diversity in clinical trials.

NCI Director Appointment Unknown for Biden Administration
National Cancer Institute (NCI) Director Norman “Ned” Sharpless, MD, formally submitted a resignation letter at the start of the Biden administration on January 20 but currently remains in his role as appointed during the Trump administration, reported The Cancer Letter (subscription required). The article notes that several past NCI directors have remained in place as administrations have shifted between Democrats and Republicans, so it is not yet clear if Sharpless will also maintain his role under President Biden. The NCI director is appointed by the president but does not require Senate confirmation.

NPR: NIH Director on State of COVID-19
NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, participated in a January 18 interview on NPR to discuss the state of the pandemic in the United States. Dr. Collins discussed rollout of the coronavirus vaccines, new strains of the virus and plans to increase surveillance sequencing of the virus, and additional vaccines in the clinical trials pipeline.

**Open Mike: Enhancing Diversity at NIH-Funded Conferences**

NIH Director of Extramural Research Mike Lauer, MD, discussed in a January 22 blog post a recent NIH guide notice implementing new requirements to increase diversity at scientific conferences for applicants and recipients of NIH conference grants. Beginning in April, applicants must include a diversity plan which could include identifying ways to increase conference participation from underrepresented groups, a consideration of the geographic areas from which attendees will come, strategies to monitor effectiveness of diversification efforts, and opportunities to highlight successes at enhancing diversity.

**C&EN: How COVID-19 Has Changed the Culture of Science**

Chemical & Engineering News on January 25 reported on the good, the bad, and the unknown of how COVID-19 has changed the culture of science. The article emphasized the importance of elevating the voices of scientists, increased collaborations, and increased work flexibilities contrasting with negative impacts on workforce diversity, setbacks for early-career researchers, and the politicization of science. The article highlights the yet unknown impacts on in-person conferences, lab culture in a socially distant environment, and the stability of institutions that support scientists. NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, noted, “When you have a pressing need, like the worst pandemic in 102 years, it does require organizing science in new, creative, and productive ways…And that has been amazing to see happening.” Collins also touched on the lost momentum in non-COVID research areas, and the significant impacts to universities.

**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 http://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.

Requests for Public Comment

FNLCR Seeks Feedback on Opportunities for New Programs – February 19
The National Cancer Institute (NCI) issued a Request for Information (RFI) to solicit public comments on opportunities for new national programs at NCI’s Frederick National Laboratory for Cancer Research (FNLCR). This RFI is part of a planning effort to identify unique biomedical research programs that the FNLCR could support over the next several years that are too large for individual labs to address, but could be tackled through the resources, technologies, and synergism available through a Federally Funded Research and Development Center such as the FNLCR. Responses will be accepted through February 19 and should be marked with this RFI identifier "RFI Response". Responses are preferred in electronic format and should be e-mailed to RFI_NewNationalPrograms@nih.gov.

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.

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.

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.