Ad Hoc Group Weekly COVID-19 Follow Up
January 28, 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

Congress Prepares Consideration of Budget Resolution, COVID-19 Package
The full Senate is expected to consider a budget resolution for 2021 during the week of February 1, before consideration by the House, as reported this week in Roll Call. Establishment of a budget resolution would allow committees of jurisdiction to draft relevant portions of the next COVID-19 relief package and allow Congress to use budget reconciliation to pass the next comprehensive package by a simple majority. Congressional activity follows the recent release of President Biden's $1.9 trillion pandemic rescue proposal. Congressional leaders are aiming to finish the next package before the unemployment insurance benefits expire on March 14.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) amended the House schedule leading up to March 14 to accommodate efforts to pass additional COVID-19 relief.

Vice President Receives Second COVID-19 Vaccine at NIH, Reflects on Mother’s Research Career
Vice President Kamala Harris visited the NIH to receive her second COVID-19 vaccine dose on January 26, and shared her personal connection to the agency and to medical research. Vice President Harris’s mother was a breast cancer researcher and would often travel to the NIH, reported CNN. “The work that happens here has one goal: to improve public health. And the importance of the pursuit of the work that happens at NIH is it's not about profit. It's about the people,” Vice President Harris said to NIH staff. “I know the work you do and the collaboration that is required... On behalf of President Biden and myself, I thank you for everything you do every day,” she concluded.

BGOV: Trump Cancer Research Chief Retains Interim Role
National Cancer Institute (NCI) Director Norman “Ned” Sharpless, MD, will remain in his role as the Biden administration gets underway, as reported on January 26 in BGOV (subscription required). It is yet unclear if Dr. Sharpless’s continued service will be permanent, as the NCI director is appointed by the President but does not require confirmation by the Senate. President Biden previously announced that NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, would permanently retain his role under the new administration.
NIH Launches Database to Track COVID-19 Neurological Symptoms
The NIH launched a new database on January 26 to collect a variety of COVID-19 patient outcomes information related to the nervous system. The database is supported by the NIH’s National Institutes of Health’s National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), which issued a January 26 news release to share details of the new database COVID-19 Neuro Databank/Biobank (NeuroCOVID). NeuroCOVID will be accessible for clinicians to input deidentified patient data related to COVID-19-related neurological symptoms, complications, and outcomes as well as COVID-19 effects on pre-existing neurological conditions and will be accessible for researchers to investigate mitigation efforts to prevent neurological complications of COVID-19. “We know that COVID-19 can disrupt multiple body systems but the effects of the virus and the body’s response to COVID-19 infection on the brain, spinal cord, nerves and muscle can be particularly devastating, and contribute to persistence of disability even after the virus is cleared,” said Barbara Karp, M.D., program director at NINDS.

NIDA: Methamphetamine Overdose Deaths Rise Sharply Nationwide
Research supported by the NIH’s National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) indicates a significant increase in methamphetamine overdose-related deaths across all racial and ethnic groups between 2011 and 2018. A January 20 NIDA news release summarized the findings, citing the biggest increases in overdose-related deaths occurring amongst non-Hispanic American Indian and Alaska Natives. “While much attention is focused on the opioid crisis, a methamphetamine crisis has been quietly, but actively, gaining steam—particularly among American Indians and Alaska Natives, who are disproportionately affected by a number of health conditions,” said Nora D. Volkow, MD, NIDA director and a senior author of the study.

Upcoming Events

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. Awarded receive a $4,000 stipend to complete their project. The deadline to apply is February 5, 2021. Please email HIVMA staff with questions.
**NEW** Friends of NIEHS Virtual Briefing – February 9

You are invited to the Friends of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) briefing, Building Resilience in A Changing World: The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences’ (NIEHS) Response To Wildfires, Hazardous Materials Incidents, And Other Disasters Before And During The COVID-19 Pandemic, on February 9 from 12:30 – 1:45pm EST. Featured Speakers include NIEHS Director Richard Woychik, PhD.

Please register here for this online event.

**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.
NEW  AACR Seeks Associate Director, Science and Health Policy

The American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) seeks an Associate Director, Science and Health Policy. The Associate Director, Science and Health Policy, will work to strengthen the dialogue between policymakers, scientists, and advocates, as well as support policies to advance cancer research and improve patient care and public health. This individual will provide specialized expertise on science and health policy issues that are important to AACR leadership, with a primary focus on tobacco control policy and a secondary science or health policy focus to be determined, depending on the candidate’s experience. More information on the opening can be found here.

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.