Ad Hoc Group Weekly Round Up
February 1, 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:

Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
@FASEBorg – January 25

Get the most currently available data on #NIH’s funding levels, grant awards, and application success rates. View our analysis in "National Institutes of Health (NIH) Appropriations & Grant Trends."

Senate Republicans Set to Release Compromise COVID-19 Legislation
A group of 10 Senate Republicans sent a January 31 letter to President Biden outlining a $600 billion COVID-19 relief counterproposal to the president’s $1.9 trillion rescue package. Roll Call outlined the new proposal, including its alignment with the president’s proposal to invest in vaccinations and increased COVID-19 testing. The 10 Senators are expected to meet with President Biden today at the White House.

Despite the president’s efforts to formulate a bipartisan agreement on the next COVID-19 package, House and Senate Democrats are expected to move forward this week with developing a 2021 budget resolution, which would allow for consideration of the $1.9 trillion proposal under reconciliation. Roll Call reported on a potential budget resolution timeline and committee instructions on January 29.

House Republican Appropriations Subcommittee Assignments Released

Researchers Use Patients’ Cells to Test Gene Therapy for Rare Eye Disease
Researchers from NIH’s National Eye Institute (NEI) have published promising results showing partial restoration of protein function in an organoid model of the genetic eye disease Leber congenital amaurosis, as described in a January 28 NIH news release. The researchers derived retinal organoids from affected patients and their health family members before increasing expression of the affected gene, which led to partial restoration of the resulting protein’s function. “This proof-of-concept gene therapy study is the first step toward a potential treatment for a rare form of LCA,” said Brian Brooks, MD, NEI clinical director and co-author on the study. “It’s a great example of bench-to-bedside science, when researchers in basic and clinical science collaborate.”

NIH Director Interviewed on Track the Vax Podcast, Shares COVID-19 Updates
NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, joined a January 27 edition of the Track the Vax podcast where he provided updates on COVID-19 therapeutics and the Biden administration’s vaccine rollout plan. Regarding NIH’s COVID-19 response, Collins noted, “for all of us at NIH, seeing that we are the largest supporter of biomedical research in the world, we have a big responsibility here to push this forward in every possible creative, innovative way to try to come up with better approaches for diagnostics, for therapeutics, for vaccines.” Collins also highlighted lessons learned and successful collaborations that have emerged from the global COVID-19 response.

Director’s Blog: Following COVID-19 Vaccines Across the United States
NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, highlighted resources to track COVID-19 vaccinations across the U.S.in a January 28 director’s blog. “If 80 percent of Americans roll up their sleeves in the coming months and accept COVID-19 vaccinations, we can greatly slow the spread of the novel coronavirus in our communities and bring this horrible pandemic to an end in 2021,” stated Collins. The post highlighted data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as Johns Hopkins University, which includes daily updates on state vaccination rates. “In uncertain times, knowledge can be a source of comfort. That’s what makes these interactive COVID-19 resources so helpful and empowering,” wrote Collins.

Upcoming Events

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.

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.

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 synergy 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.

Requests for Public Comment

NEW AAI Seeks Science Policy Analyst

The American Association of Immunologists (AAI) seeks a Science Policy Analyst to research, analyze, and respond to relevant issues involving biomedical research, NIH, and other federal agencies, and to assist with AAI science policy programs and advocacy activities. For further information or to apply, click here.

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.