Ad Hoc Group Weekly COVID-19 Follow Up
February 4, 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

House Passes Budget Resolution, Senate to Finish Debate, Consider Amendments
The House of Representatives passed a budget resolution for 2021, H. Con. Res. 11, by a vote of 218-212 on February 3, allowing committees of jurisdiction to draft relevant portions of the next COVID-19 relief package. The resolution would allow for up to $1.9 trillion in spending, equal to the cost of President Biden’s COVID-19 rescue proposal, reports CQ (subscription required). The measure would also allow Congress to use budget reconciliation to pass the next comprehensive package by a simple majority. The Senate is expected to consider its own, nearly identical version of a budget resolution on February 4, including amendment consideration through a vote-a-rama. Over 900 amendments to S. Con. Res. 5 have been submitted for consideration.

Senate Reaches Power-Sharing Agreement, Releases Committee Assignments
The Senate adopted a power-sharing agreement for the 117th Congress by unanimous consent on February 3. S. Res. 27 outlines procedures, standing rules, and precedents for this Congress, including granting equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans on Senate committees, with Democrats holding the chair positions. Additional provisions of the organizing resolution were reviewed February 3 in Roll Call.

Passage of S. Res. 27 allowed for Senate committees to organize. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) released Democrats’ committee assignments, with Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) appointed to Chair of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.

Severe COVID-19 In Pregnancy Associated with Preterm Birth, Other Complications
An NIH funded study on COVID-19 and pregnancy showed that severe COVID-19 disease correlated with higher risk for cesarean delivery, postpartum hemorrhage, hypertension, and preterm birth compared to COVID-19 patients without symptoms, as reported in a January 28 NIH media advisory. The study was funded by NIH’s Eunice Kennedy Shriver
Director’s Blog: Can Blood Thinners Keep Moderately Ill COVID-19 Patients Out of the ICU?
NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, summarized results of three clinical trials investigating the use of blood thinning treatments in preventing deadly blood clots as a result of COVID-19 in a February 2 blog post. A Phase 3 trial through the ACTIV partnership and overseen by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute showed that “individuals hospitalized, but not severely ill, with COVID-19 who received a full intravenous dose of the common blood thinner heparin were less likely to need vital organ support” compared to patients receiving a subcutaneous dose of heparin. Collins emphasized the importance of continued clinical research into mitigating severe COVID-19 outcomes, and the swift implementation of these results into clinical practice. “Together with our efforts to slow the spread of SARS-CoV-2, finding better ways to treat those who do get sick and prevent some of the worst outcomes will help us finally put this terrible pandemic behind us,” Collins concluded.

Open Mike: NIH R01 Grant Outcomes of T32 Postdoctoral Participants
NIH Director of Extramural Research (OER) Michael Lauer, MD, summarized analyses of career development grant outcomes of post-doctoral T32 grant recipients in a February 1 Open Mike blog post. The NIH OER analyzed outcomes of more than 35,000 T32 trainees who began their postdoctoral training between 1995 and 2009 after receiving an MD, MD-PhD, or PhD degree. “We find that men with MD-PhD degrees had the highest rates for R01 application submission and award receipt (as PI). Women comprised a greater proportion of trainees over time. Serving as PI on a K-awards predicted a substantially higher rate of later support as PI on R01 awards,” summarized Lauer.

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.

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.

NEW 21st Century Cures Act: Update on Implementation - March 11
The NIH Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) is co-hosting a webinar with the United States Department of Agriculture and Food and Drug Administration to provide updates on the agencies' progress in implementing measures of the 21st Century Cures Act related to laboratory animals. The webinar will be posted here on March 11.

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

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.

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.