Ad Hoc Group Weekly Round Up
February 8, 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:

**Endocrine Society @TheEndoSociety – February 5**

Grad students and postdocs may lose opportunities to advance their careers due to coronavirus-related lab closures. We support #ResearchRelief so the nextgen can take their science careers to the next level. #RISEAct

**Lawmakers Introduce Bipartisan, Bicameral RISE Act**

The Research Investment to Spark the Economy (RISE) Act of 2021, which would authorize $25 billion in supplemental funding for federal research agencies including $10 billion for the NIH, was introduced on Feb. 5 with bipartisan co-sponsors in both the House and the Senate. The RISE Act aims to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 to the U.S. research enterprise.

The Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research issued a [Feb. 5 press statement](https://www.adhocgroup.org) in support of the legislation and reiterated the urgent need for research relief funding: “As Congress considers new rescue and recovery support, $10 billion for the NIH as proposed in the RISE Act would be an important down-payment toward reversing some of the damage to non-COVID-19 research activities caused by the pandemic.”

Lead sponsors of the bill include Reps. Diana DeGette (D-Colo.), Fred Upton (R-Mich.), Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Texas), Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.), and Anthony Gonzalez (R-Ohio), as well as Sens. Edward Markey (D-Mass.), Thom Tillis (R-N.C.), Susan Collins (R-Maine), and Gary Peters (D-Mich.). Nearly 80 members of the House joined as original co-sponsors.

**House to Mark Up COVID Relief Following Passage of Budget Resolution**

Twelve authorizing committees in the House of Representatives will begin drafting their respective portions of the next COVID-19 relief package during the week of February 8, including the Energy and Commerce Committee, with jurisdiction over the NIH (more in BGOV, subscription required). Drafting of the relief package follows Senate and House passage of an amended version of the budget resolution S. Con. Res. 5 on Feb. 5, a FY 2021 budget resolution that can be used as a vehicle that could expedite consideration of
the next COVID-19 legislation. The budget resolution includes instructions giving committees of jurisdiction until Feb. 16 to draft a COVID-19 relief bill that would include up to $1.9 trillion in spending — the cost of President Joe Biden’s “American Rescue Plan.”

**TIME:** NIH Director’s Profile Highlights Leadership at NIH, COVID Contributions

NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, was highlighted in a February 4 *TIME* profile covering his medical and research training, his accomplishments in human genetics research, his unique tenure as NIH director through three presidential administrations, his faith, and his ability to garner bipartisan support for medical research. The profile also reviewed Collins’ approach to the COVID-19 pandemic response, citing the ACTIV public-private partnership which supported the development of novel COVID-19 vaccines.

**NIH Networks to Advance Emotional Well-Being Research**

The NIH announced the creation of five new NIH-funded research networks to investigate emotional well-being in a February 1 news release. The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) and the National Institute on Aging (NIA) will co-lead the $3.1 million effort. “Understanding the science of emotional well-being and how we can apply its concepts to help people live and feel better will benefit our efforts to improve health and health care,” said Dr. Helene Langevin, NCCIH director. “These networks will identify factors that influence emotional well-being over the life course and inform the design of interventions to promote emotional health and reduce suffering in at-risk populations of all ages,” said Dr. Lis Nielsen, director of the NIA Division of Social and Behavioral Research.

**Fecal Microbiota Transplants Help Patients with Advanced Melanoma Respond to Immunotherapy**

The NIH issued a February 4 news release describing findings from National Cancer Institute (NCI) and University of Pittsburgh researchers showing that cancer patients who do not respond to immunotherapy may benefit from adjustments in their gut microbiome. The study of advanced melanoma patients who were initially unresponsive to an immunotherapy treatment showed improved responsiveness to the drug in the same patients following a fecal transplant to introduce different microorganisms into the patients’ intestines. “Our study is one of the first to demonstrate in patients that altering the composition of the gut microbiome can improve the response to immunotherapy. The data provide proof of concept that the gut microbiome can be a therapeutic target in cancer,” said study co-leader Giorgio Trinchieri, MD, chief of the Laboratory of Integrative Cancer Immunology in NCI’s Center for Cancer Research.

**Computerized Adaptive Screener May Help Identify Youth at Risk for Suicide**

New research funded by the NIH’s National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) shows that an adaptive set of screening questions has the ability to correctly identify adolescents at risk of suicide, reported the NIH in a February 3 news release. The computerized adaptive screen for suicidal youth (CASSY), consists of approximately 11 questions and correctly identified more than 80% of research participants between ages 12 and 17 who attempted suicide in the three months following screening in an emergency department. “The CASSY screener represents an important advance in identifying those adolescents who
are at risk for suicide, so they can be connected with the critical support services they need.” said Joshua A. Gordon, MD, PhD, director of NIMH.

Upcoming Events

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 World Glaucoma Day Virtual Briefing – March 11
The Alliance for Eye and Vision Research (AEVR) is co-hosting a virtual Congressional briefing in recognition of World Glaucoma Day on March 11 at 12:00pm EST titled, “Glaucoma: Clinical Practice and Research to Optimize Patient Outcomes.” Please see attached for additional information, and RSVP to Dina Beaumont @ 202-407-8325 or dinabeau@aol.com.

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.

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.

Job Postings

NEW NHLBI Seeks Science Policy Analyst

NIH’s National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) seeks a Science Policy Analyst to assist in the institute’s engagement with Congress. The analyst’s role will include reviewing proposed legislation, responding to Congressional inquiries, preparing public outreach materials, and more. Additional information and instructions for applying can be found here.

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.*