Ad Hoc Group Weekly COVID-19 Follow Up
February 25, 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

First Lady, NCI Director Visit VCU Comprehensive Cancer Center
First Lady Jill Biden, PhD, joined National Cancer Institute Director Ned Sharpless, MD, on February 24 in visiting the Virginia Commonwealth University’s Massey Cancer Center for her first public trip outside of Washington, D.C. Dr. Biden toured several research labs and in her prepared remarks, shared her personal connection to cancer and importance of addressing health inequities not only in cancer care but in health care broadly, reported the Washington Post.

Senate Committees Hear Testimony from HHS Secretary Nominee
Xavier Becerra, President Biden’s nominee to be Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), appeared before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee on February 23 and the Senate Finance Committee on February 24. Related to research, Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.) engaged Becerra in a discussion on march-in rights, and Becerra commented on health equity and his intention to work on increasing diversity in clinical trials. Additional details of the Finance and HELP committee hearings are covered in BGOV (subscription required).

NIH Launches New Initiative to Study “Long COVID”
NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, on February 23 announced the first research opportunity announcements (ROA) to fund research into long-term effects of COVID-19, or Post-Acute Sequelae of SARS-CoV-2 infection (PASC). Research to be awarded through the ROA will be funded by the more than $1 billion the NIH received in the December omnibus to study PASC over four years. Dr. Collins summarized several initial research questions to address, as well as ongoing studies and the creation of core resources. Additional reporting is provided by BGOV (subscription required).

NIH: People with SARS-CoV-2 Antibodies May Have A Low Risk of Future Infection
A February 24 NIH news release summarized new research showing that a previous SARS-CoV-2 infection provides several months of protection against reinfection. The National Cancer Institute (NCI)-funded study utilized NCI’s expertise in serological
sciences to connect SARS-CoV-2 antibody test results and aggregated patient data from more than 3 million people to develop this conclusion. "The data from this study suggest that people who have a positive result from a commercial antibody test appear to have substantial immunity to SARS-CoV-2, which means they may be at lower risk for future infection," said Lynne Penberthy, MD, MPH, associate director of NCI’s Surveillance Research Program. "Additional research is needed to understand how long this protection lasts, who may have limited protection, and how patient characteristics, such as comorbid conditions, may impact protection."

**Director's Blog: Is One Vaccine Dose Enough After COVID-19 Infection?**

NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, authored a February 23 blog post to summarize early reports of an NIH-funded study into the efficacy of just one dose of an approved COVID-19 vaccine in individuals with a prior SARS-CoV-2 infection. "The findings show that immune response to the first vaccine dose in a person who’s already had COVID-19 is equal to, or in some cases better, than the response to the second dose in a person who hasn’t had COVID-19," Collins said. Collins added that additional research is needed to support changing current recommendations of a two-dose vaccination.

### Upcoming Events

**COVID-19 Research in States with Rural and Underserved Populations – February 26**
The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) is hosting an upcoming webinar, COVID-19 Research in States with Rural and Underserved Populations: Highlights from the IDeA Program. The Institutional Development Award (IDeA) Program strengthens research capacity in states that receive less NIH funding. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program’s grantees have been conducting invaluable research and this webinar will feature three examples of the important work. The webinar will take place on Friday, February 26, from 2:00 – 3:00 pm EST. Please register here.

**NIH ACD Special Meeting on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion - February 26**
The NIH Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD) will hold a special meeting with updates on NIH Workforce Plans to Promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Biomedical Research. The meeting will be webcast on February 26 from 3:00 - 5:30 pm EST.

**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.

**Virtual Briefing: Understanding Sex and Gender in Research – March 2**
The Society for Women's Health Research and the Endocrine Society are hosting a virtual Congressional briefing to highlight the importance of sex and gender in biomedical research. Please see here for more information, and register via Zoom to attend the briefing on March 2 at 2pm EST.

**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.

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

**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.