Ad Hoc Group Weekly COVID-19 Follow Up
March 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

Biden, Harris Meet with Bipartisan Lawmakers to Discuss Cancer Research
President Biden and Vice President Harris hosted nine bipartisan, bicameral lawmakers for a March 3 meeting to discuss “end[ing] cancer as we know it,” according to a White House readout of the meeting. Meeting participants Reps. Diana DeGette (D-Colo.) and Fred Upton (R-Mich.) issued a joint statement added that the meeting covered the outcomes of the 21st Century Cures Act and the President’s ARPA-H proposal which the lawmakers described as building on the goals of 21st Century Cures. The Hill reported that additional meeting attendees included Sens. Patty Murray (D-Wash.), Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) and Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) and Reps. Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.) and Brett Guthrie (R-Ky.).

House Democratic Leaders Support Shalanda Young to Lead OMB
House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), and Majority Whip Jim Clyburn (D-S.C.) issued a March 3 statement in support of Shalanda Young to be the next Office of Management and Budget (OMB) director, following the withdrawal of Neera Tanden’s nomination for the role. “We have worked closely with her for several years and highly recommend her for her intellect, her deep expertise on the federal budget and her determination to ensure that our budget reflects our values as a nation,” the lawmakers said. Young has been nominated to the role of OMB deputy director and completed her nomination hearing before the Senate Budget Committee on March 2, reported Politico. She previously served as clerk and staff director of the House Appropriations Committee.

NIH Launches Initiative to Address Structural Racism in Biomedical Research
On March 1, the NIH launched an effort to end structural racism in biomedical research through a new initiative called UNITE. NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD issued a statement committing NIH to instituting new ways to support diversity, equity, and inclusion, and identifying and dismantling any policies and practices that may harm our workforce and our science. With the announcement, the NIH issued a Request for
Information seeking input on practical and effective approaches to improve and strengthen racial equity, diversity, and inclusion across all facets of the biomedical research enterprise, both within NIH and the external community, and expand research to eliminate or lessen health disparities and inequities. Comments can be submitted through the submission website and must be received by April 9, 2021.

NLM Director’s Blog: Vaccines, Vaccinations, and NLM
National Library of Medicine (NLM) Director Patti Brennan, RN, PhD, reflected on the ways NLM has contributed to the COVID-19 pandemic response and vaccine development in a March 3 blog post. NLM supported data sharing of SARS-CoV-2 genome sequences through the GenBank database, the website Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 data hub, ClinicalTrials.gov, and MedLinePlus resource providing consumer health information from several federal agencies. Brennan added, “NLM identifies, selects, and archives a remarkable volume of content documenting these pandemics, from the scientific journals to the public health announcements. We were here 100 years ago, preserving information about the 1918 influenza pandemic.”

News Release: NIH Halts Trial Of COVID-19 Convalescent Plasma in Emergency Department Patients with Mild Symptoms
The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) halted enrollment of a convalescent plasma therapy clinical trial in certain COVID-19 patients after determining that the therapy was “unlikely” to improve outcomes, as reported in a March 2 NIH news release. The study enrolled patients from nearly 50 emergency department with mild to moderate COVID-19 and at least one additional comorbidity and measured outcomes related to further emergency care, hospitalization, and death. “The recent data analysis from the study indicated no significant difference in the proportion of participants who experienced any one of these outcomes. Even if enrollment continued, this trial was highly unlikely to demonstrate that COVID-19 convalescent plasma prevents progression from mild to severe illness in at-risk emergency department non-hospitalized participants,” the news release said.

Open Mike: Announcement of Childcare Costs Supplement in Fellowship Awards
NIH Office of Extramural Research Director Mike Lauer, MD, authored a March 2 Open Mike blog post highlighting NIH’s announcement that certain trainees will soon have the option to request childcare cost support in new and continuing applications or as administrative supplements. The additional support, $2,500 per budget period, will be available to National Research Service Award (NRSA) fellows. “NIH is dedicated to fostering a well-trained and diverse biomedical research workforce, which involves supporting family-friendly policies and initiatives that balance work and family life for all biomedical researchers,” Lauer added.

News Release: NIH Effort Seeks to Understand MIS-C, Range of SARS-CoV-2 Effects on Children
A March 2 NIH news release summarized a new NIH initiative to study COVID-19 risks and impacts to children, with a specific focus on multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C). The Collaboration to Assess Risk and Identify Long-term Outcomes for Children with COVID (CARING for Children with COVID) will be led by three NIH institutes and includes three existing clinical trials networks to investigate different aspects of
COVID-19 health outcomes in children. “Although the studies supported by CARING for Children with COVID have slightly different goals, all will collect data on a core set of health measures that can later be analyzed across studies. Data from CARING for Children with COVID activities will be made available on multiple NIH web platforms to allow researchers to conduct additional analyses and make more discoveries,” the statement said.

Upcoming Events

**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.

**NEW** NIH Showcase of Alzheimers.gov – March 16
Alzheimers.gov is a new educational resource and portal to federal information on Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias for people living with dementia, caregivers, health care providers, community and public health professionals, and researchers. In this webinar, the National Institute on Aging will share the process behind developing Alzheimers.gov and provide a tour of the new website. To join the showcase, simply join here on March 16th at 2PM EST.

**NEW** The All of Us Research Hub: Data Access and Protections Webinar – March 16
The All of Us Research Program is hosting a webinar on the Research Hub on Tuesday, March 16th from 3:00 – 4:00 pm EST. The All of Us Research Hub contains health data from a diverse group of participants from across the U.S, and approved researchers can access All of Us data and tools to conduct studies to help improve our understanding of health. This webinar will explore: the Research Hub, important program policies on the protection and use of participant data, and engagement efforts focused on ensuring a diverse community of researchers are ready to leverage the All of Us resource. Please register here.

**NEW** Virtual Congressional Neuroscience Caucus Briefing on Neurodevelopmental Disorders – March 17
The American Brain Coalition, Autism Speaks, American Academy of Neurology, Cerebral Palsy Research Network, and the Society for Neuroscience are joining with the Congressional Neuroscience Caucus to host a virtual briefing, “Neurodevelopmental
Disorders: The Challenges and the Opportunities.” The briefing will take place on Wednesday, March 17, from 2-3pm EST. Please register here.

**NEW** Apply for the Childhood Eczema Challenge Grant – Deadline May 4

Applications for the 2021 National Eczema Association/Pediatric Dermatology Research Alliance Childhood Eczema Grant in the amount of $50,000 are due May 4. Additional details and a link to apply are on the [NEA website](https://www.nea.org/).  

**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**

**NEW** ACT for NIH Seeks Vice President, Advocacy & Operations Manager

ACT for NIH, a non-profit dedicated to increasing Federal biomedical research funding to help save lives, currently seeks to fill two positions. The ideal candidate for Vice President is a proven leader with Hill and/or advocacy expertise and knowledgeable about NIH to work closely with the ACT for NIH President to design and implement our advocacy strategy. The Vice President will have a portfolio of advocacy initiatives and will also work with the biomedical research community, helping build broad support for increased NIH funding.

The Advocacy & Operations Manager will assist with advocacy, communications, and Hill events, and help the team keep day-to-day activities on-track. The Manager also leads finance and operations and manages campaign outreach. Additional details and application instructions are available on the website at: [https://www.actfornih.org/careers/](https://www.actfornih.org/careers/).

**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.*