Ad Hoc Group Weekly COVID-19 Follow Up

March 11, 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

Ad Hoc Group Statement on Senator Blunt’s Retirement
The Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research issued a March 9 statement in response to Sen. Blunt’s statement that he will retire when his term ends in 2022. “His leadership and commitment to working in a bipartisan manner have been instrumental in driving a trajectory of sustained, robust budget growth for the NIH, allowing for new opportunities to advance promising research, support the next generation of scientists, and outpace our global competitors,” the statement said. A March 9 article in BGOV also described Sen. Blunt’s longstanding efforts to prioritize the NIH and work with bipartisan colleagues to return the agency to a budget trajectory of sustained, robust funding growth (subscription required).

NIH: Study of Mosquito Protein Could Lead to Treatments Against Life-Threatening Viruses
Scientists from NIH’s National Institute of Environmental Health Science (NIEHS) published new results showing the mosquito protein AEG12 is able to destabilize viruses that cause diseases like yellow fever, West Nile, and Zika, reported a March 10 NIH news release. AEG12 also appears to have a moderate destabilization effect on coronaviruses. The research findings could lead to additional research to identify new therapeutics against enveloped viruses.

NIH Director Discusses Drug Repurposing for COVID-19 on 60 Minutes
NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, appeared on the March 7 episode of 60 Minutes to discuss the possibility of repurposing an antidepressant to treat COVID-19. The generic drug fluvoxamine has been used for 40 years mostly to treat obsessive compulsive disorder. Collins noted the scientific community eagerly awaits initial clinical trials results of the repurposed drug, and that the NIH is considering adding an additional arm to existing trials to collect more data on the impacts on hospitalization rates for COVID-19 patients who receive the drug.
Under the Poliscope: Parenting in a Time of COVID

NIH Associate Director for Science Policy Carrie Wolinetz, PhD, authored an Under the Poliscope blog post on her experiences parenting during COVID-19. Wolinetz reflects on her personal efforts to juggle parenting and career and the impacts of the pandemic on working women, especially in science. “There is recognition across the biomedical enterprise that the long-term impact of the pandemic could entail a devastating setback for women and others with dependent care responsibilities, and there are a lot of discussions of strategies to minimize that risk,” Wolinetz writes. “We need to create an environment that feels safe for caregivers, particularly women, to talk about their real-world dilemmas and ask for help or just feel empathy from their peers, without feeling like revealing this diminishes us as professionals.”

Ad Hoc Group, Coalition for Health Funding Host Virtual Briefing with NIA Director

National Institute on Aging (NIA) Director Richard Hodes, MD, presented on NIA’s research to address COVID-19 and the pre-existing research infrastructure that has allowed NIA to respond quickly to investigate the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on older populations. Dr. Hodes’s March 3 presentation was supported by the Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research in collaboration with the Coalition for Health Funding as part of a series of virtual briefings with directors of NIH’s institutes and centers to discuss how research to date and ongoing work can inform our continued response to the coronavirus, as well as the impact the pandemic is having on existing research across the agency’s broad portfolio.

Upcoming Events

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 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.

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.

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 World TB Day Congressional Briefings – March 22 and 24, 2021

The TB Roundtable is co-hosting a series of virtual congressional briefings with the House TB Elimination Caucus and Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) to commemorate World Tuberculosis Day. The first briefing, Ending Tuberculosis: How to Save Lives at Home and Abroad, is March 22 from 11:30am – 12:45pm EST. Please see attached for additional information and register to attend. The second briefing, COVID-19: How the Pandemic Has Impacted TB Elimination Efforts, is March 24 from 12:30 – 1:30pm EST. Please see attached for more information and to register.

NEW Diversity in Research: Benefits for All – March 24

The Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation is hosting a conversation led by Junelle Speller, Vice President, PFF Registry, about the importance of including people from a wide range of backgrounds in medical research, and the impact it has on developing treatments and achieving better health outcomes for all patients. Anna María Nápoles, PhD, MPH, scientific director at NIH’s National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities. The event will take place on March 24 at 1pm EST. Please register here.

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.

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.

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**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.