Ad Hoc Group Weekly Round Up
April 5, 2021

Only the Monday Ad Hoc Round Up will be published while Congress is in recess. The Thursday edition, the Ad Hoc Group Follow Up, will resume publication after Congress returns on April 12.

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:

One Voice Against Cancer @OVACInfo – April 2
#Cancer takes a disproportionate toll on communities of color. With increased federal cancer funding, we could ensure that all communities have access to lifesaving screening and prevention programs. @theNCI @NIH @CDC_Cancer #MinorityHealthMonth

President’s FY22 Budget Proposal Delayed
President Biden’s FY 2022 topline discretionary budget request, originally expected the week of March 29, has been delayed. As reported April 2 in Politico (subscription required), Office of Management and Budget spokesperson Rob Friedlander said the request will be released “soon.” The request is expected to include to total discretionary spending request as well as top line funding for each federal agency, with a more detailed budget released expected later this spring.

President Unveils $2 Trillion Infrastructure Package
President Joe Biden outlined on March 31 the American Jobs Plan, a proposed $2 trillion economic recovery investment over eight years to support transportation infrastructure, broadband access, the care economy, and research and development (R&D). “It will grow the economy, make us more competitive around the world, promote our national security interests, and put us in a position to win the global competition with China in the upcoming years,” Biden stated when announcing the plan. The proposal would include more than $180 billion in new R&D investments for research and innovation broadly, and $30 billion to support several biopreparedness and biosecurity priorities, with no direct investments for the NIH outlined in the corresponding fact
The American Jobs Plan is the first of two economic investment proposals, with part two, the American Families Plan, expected later this spring.

**Director’s Blog: Increased Mortality with COVID-19 Variants**

NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, discussed the heightened mortality risk that accompanies the new coronavirus variant, B.1.1.7, in a [March 30 blog post](https://www.nih.gov/nih-topic/qa/director-s-blog/increased-mortality-with-covid-19-variants). The more contagious B.1.1.7 variant was first detected in the United Kingdom in September 2020, and recent studies in *Nature* and the *British Medical Journal* confirmed its increased transmissibility and increased risk of death that it poses a more than 50% greater risk of death relative to other SARS-CoV-2 variants. “The findings are yet another reminder that, while we’re making truly remarkable progress in the fight against COVID-19 with increasing availability of safe and effective vaccines (more than 45 million Americans are now fully immunized), now is not the time to get complacent. This devastating pandemic isn’t over yet,” Collins concluded.

**NIH News Releases: T Cells Recognize SARS-CoV-2 Variants, New Clinical Trial**

Recent NIH-led research has shown that immune cells recognize SARS-CoV-2 variants, reported a [March 30 NIH news release](https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-release-nih-news-releases/t-cells-recognize-sars-cov-2-variants-new-clinical-trial). To investigate whether prior infection or vaccination would provide protection against novel SARS-CoV-2 variants, researchers from NIH’s National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and grantees analyzed blood samples from 30 individuals who recovered from COVID-19 prior to the emergence of new viral variants. Researchers discovered that the CD8+ T cell could still recognize three new variants, including B.1.1.7, B.1.351, and B.1.1.248, indicating that the T cell response should offer protection against emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants.

Separately, a [March 31 NIH news release](https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-release-nih-news-releases/cdc-and-nih-bring-covid-19-self-testing-to-residents-in-two-locales) summarized NIAID’s efforts to support a clinical trial for a new investigational mRNA vaccine designed to protect against the SARS-CoV-2 variant B.1.351, first identified in South Africa. “Preliminary data show that the COVID-19 vaccines currently available in the United States should provide an adequate degree of protection against SARS-CoV-2 variants. However, out of an abundance of caution, NIAID has continued its partnership with Moderna to evaluate this variant vaccine candidate should there be a need for an updated vaccine,” NIAID Director Anthony Fauci, MD, stated.

**NIH News Release: CDC and NIH Bring COVID-19 Self-Testing to Residents in Two Locales**

The NIH and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have launched “Say Yes! COVID Test,” a new community health initiative to bring COVID-19 self-testing to Pitt County, North Carolina, and Chattanooga/Hamilton County, Tennessee. As reported in a [March 31 NIH news release](https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-release-nih-news-releases/cdc-and-nih-bring-covid-19-self-testing-to-residents-in-two-locales), selection of the two communities was based on local infection rates, public availability of COVID-19 tracking data, existing community relationships through the NIH Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics Underserved Populations (RADx-UP) program, and local infrastructure to support the project. “This testing initiative is the first of this scale to attempt to make free, rapid, self-administered tests available community-wide in order to determine their effectiveness in
our nation’s comprehensive response to the COVID-19 pandemic," said NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD. “We hope to gain foundational data that can guide how communities can use self-administered tests to mitigate viral transmission during this and future pandemics.”

**NLM Director’s Blog: One Year of Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics, New Challenges**

16 NIH leaders joined together in a [March 31 blog post](#) to reflect on the work of the Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics initiative (RADx) over the past year. RADx was designed to help combat the COVID-19 pandemic by expediting the development of tests to detect SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19; to develop ways to deliver those tests and results directly to people, independent of their age, race, ethnicity, disability, financial status, or where they live; and to invest in innovative approaches to detect emerging and spreading infections. The post summarized the five key components of RADx: RADx Underserved Populations (RADx UP); a supporting Coordination and Data Collection Center; RADx Tech; RADx Advanced Technology Platforms (RADx ATP); and RADx Radical (RADX-rad).

**NIH News Release: Faster Development of SUD Associated with Younger Age of First Drug Use**

A [March 29 NIH news release](#) summarized recent research led by NIH’s National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), which showed that adolescents (ages 12-17) were more likely to develop a substance use disorder than young adults (ages 18-25) after first use of cannabis or misuse of prescription drugs. The study also indicated that 30% of young adults ages 18-25 develop a heroin use disorder and 25% develop a methamphetamine use disorder a year after first using heroin or methamphetamine. Dr. Nora Volkow, MD, NIDA director stated, “Though not everyone who uses a drug will develop addiction, adolescents may develop addiction to substances faster than young adults. This study provides further evidence that delaying substance exposure until the brain is more fully developed may lower risk for developing a substance use disorder.”

**Upcoming Events**

**NEW** Virtual Briefing on Demographic Insights into COVID-19 – April 23

The Population Association of America invites you to a [virtual congressional briefing](#), “Living, Working, Dying: Demographic Insights into COVID-19,” on Friday, April 23, 12:00 to 1:00 pm EST. The event will feature presentations by prominent population scientists who will present findings on the disparate impacts of COVID, especially as they relate to mortality, education, food insecurity, and family dynamics, and what additional research and data are needed to understand and address its far-reaching effects. To register, please go to: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#).

**NEW** HHS Virtual Small Business Program Conference – April 26-30

The NIH is sponsoring the 2021 HHS Small Business Program Conference titled, “Diverse Perspectives SEEDing Impactful Innovations,” from April 26-30. The free
A virtual conference will discuss how to apply for seed funding to support early-stage biomedical research and grow small businesses. Please visit the [conference website](#) for additional information and to register. NIH Deputy Director for Extramural Research Michael Lauer, MD, discusses the upcoming event in his [March 31 blog post](#).

**NEW** Virtual Social Science Advocacy Day – April 27

Join COSSA (Consortium of Social Science Associations) on April 27, 2021 to be part of the only annual, coordinated advocacy day in support of all of the social and behavioral sciences. [Social Science Advocacy Day](#) brings together social scientists and other science advocates from across the country to engage with policymakers. Last year, Advocacy Day went virtual and we will build on that for 2021 to give participants the ability to safely engage with their elected officials from home. [Register here](#) for the April 27 advocacy day.

NASEM to Host Workshop on Strategies for Effective Data Management and Sharing – April 28-29

On April 28-29, 2021, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) is hosting [Changing the Culture of Data Management and Sharing](#), a virtual public workshop to examine strategies for effective data management and sharing. The workshop will discuss challenges to and potential solutions for data management and sharing across scientific disciplines and ways researchers can integrate data management and sharing practices into their routine research conduct. The workshop aims to inform implementation strategies for the new [NIH Policy for Data Management and Sharing](#). Additional information, including the workshop agenda and registration portal, is available on the [workshop website](#).

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](#).

Support the 2021 Golden Goose Award – May 31

Last year the Golden Goose Award highlighted scientists working to understand and respond to the pandemic; the virtual ceremony was the most-watched ever, and the stories of those highlighted have continued to receive [national attention](#). The Golden Goose Award plans to recognize 2021 awardees during a virtual ceremony in September. [We are reaching out to Ad Hoc Group member organizations to ask for your support of the 2021 Golden Goose Award](#). There has perhaps never been a more important time to recognize those who have dedicated themselves to scientific research that has become critical to our health and wellbeing. Information on sponsoring the Golden Goose Award [can be found on our website](#). The deadline for pledging support for this year’s award is May 31, 2021.

Requests for Public Comment
NIH Seeks Comments on Efforts to Strengthen Equity in Biomedical Research – April 9

As a part of the UNITE initiative, the NIH issued a Request for Information (RFI) seeking public input on approaches to improve and strengthen racial equity, diversity, and inclusion across all facets of the biomedical research workforce, both within NIH and the external community. The RFI also seeks feedback on ways to expand research to eliminate or lessen health disparities and inequities. The NIH invites stakeholders throughout the scientific research, advocacy, clinical practice, and non-scientific communities, including the general public, to provide feedback by April 9, 2021.

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 SfN Seeks Advocacy Assistant

The Society for Neuroscience (SfN) seeks an advocacy assistant to provide support to federal and grassroots advocacy efforts of the SfN Advocacy and Training department, support committee activities, provide administrative support to SfN programming such as correspondence and scheduling, and support communication about advocacy, and policy positions. The full job description and applications details are available here.
ARVO Foundation for Eye Research Seeks Director of Foundation Operations

The Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO) seeks a Director of Foundation Operations. This position reports to the Executive Director and is responsible for developing, managing, and implementing operating processes and procedures, establishing documentation, and maintaining internal and external stakeholder relationships. More information can be found here.

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.