



THE AD HOC GROUP FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Ad Hoc Group Weekly COVID-19 Follow Up

April 23, 2020

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. As always, please forward any relevant items to Christa Wagner (chwagner@aamc.org) for inclusion in the publication!

Congressional and NIH News and Updates

Senate Passes Interim COVID-19 Relief Bill with \$1.8B for NIH

On April 21, the Senate passed by unanimous consent an interim COVID-19 relief spending bill including new funding for NIH. The Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act ([H.R. 266](#)) includes \$25 billion for COVID-19 testing, including \$1.8 billion for NIH divided as \$306 million for the National Cancer Institute, \$500 million for the National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering, and \$1 billion to the Office of the Director, including to support public-private partnerships. The House of Representatives is expected to consider the measure on April 23.

WaPo: Sens. Blunt and Alexander Propose “Shark Tank” for New COVID Tests

Senate Labor-HHS Appropriations Chairman Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) and Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) on April 20 [authored a Washington Post op-ed](#) sharing a proposal for increasing COVID-19 testing capacity by August. The Senators propose funding for NIH and the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) to encourage a competitive “shark tank” approach to encourage novel COVID-19 testing technologies as quickly as possible. “This is the time for both government and its industry partners to step up and pull out all the stops. American ingenuity will succeed, but like any enterprise, it needs start-up financing to help it thrive,” the Senators conclude.

NIH Publishes Treatment Guidelines for COVID-19 Patients

On April 21, NIH released [treatment guidelines to inform clinicians on how to care for COVID-19 patients](#), which will be updated as new data are published. The guidelines cover two categories of therapies — antivirals and immune-based therapies — and note that there is insufficient data to recommend for or against use of remdesivir, chloroquine, or hydroxychloroquine. The guidelines also include recommendations for breathing support as well as for pregnant women and children.

NIAID Releases COVID-19 Strategic Plan

On April 22, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID) released a [strategic plan for COVID-19 research](#). The corresponding NIH media advisory summarizes NIAID's five-year plan, highlighting four key priorities: improve fundamental knowledge of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19; support the development of diagnostics and assays; characterize and test therapeutics; and develop safe and effective vaccines against SARS-CoV-2.

Open Mike: COVID-19 Impacts on Peer Review

NIH's Review Policy Officer and Extramural Research Integrity Liaison Officer Sally Amero, PhD, authored an [April 21 Open Mike blog post](#) to address applicant concerns about the potential impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on NIH peer review outcomes. Amero reminded applicants that recently released guidance for reviewers asks that they assume applicants are facing significant and unusual challenges such as decreased support from grant personnel, difficulties achieving direct patient access due to increased human subjects protections and impacts of closed laboratory and animal research facilities. Amero encouraged applicants to continue to submit proposals with the best application they can submit at this time.

NIGMS NOSI on Equipment Supplements

As a reminder, NIH's National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) in February [released a Notice of Special Interest \(NOSI\)](#) regarding administrative supplements for equipment purchases for certain NIGMS grantees. NIGMS is still accepting applications for [these supplementary awards](#) for the purchase of single equipment systems costing up to \$250,000.

NIDA Director Discusses Coping with COVID-19 and Substance Use Disorders

NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD and National Institutes of Drug Abuse (NIDA) Director Nora Volkow, MD, [recently discussed](#) the intersection of simultaneous public health crises: COVID-19 and substance use disorders. Dr. Volkow discussed several areas of concern for vulnerable populations including the effect of social distancing, difficulties with treatment delivery, the country's growing methamphetamine crisis, and opportunities for preventing substance use disorder in future generations.

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.

[HHS COVID-19 awards tracking website](#) including data on awards made by all HHS awarding agencies with supplemental appropriations provided through the first three COVID-19 supplemental packages (Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2020; Families First Coronavirus Response Act; and the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security [CARES] Act).

Ad Hoc Group Community COVID-19 Resources

AAI Urges President, Congressional Leaders, to Heed Advice of Scientific and Public Health Experts During COVID-19 Pandemic

The leadership of the [American Association of Immunologists sent a letter](#) on April 15 to President Trump and key Members of Congress emphasizing that “[n]ow more than ever, it is essential that we allow the science, and those who know it best, to play a leading role in guiding us through these difficult times.” The letter describes the crucial contributions that immunologists, including Dr. Anthony Fauci, are making to global efforts to combat COVID-19.

Upcoming Events

NIH OITE Hosts Webinar Series on Trainee Wellness – Week of April 20

The NIH’s Office of Intramural Training and Education (OITE) continues to host various events focusing on trainee wellness and other career development topics, while trainees and researchers are working from home during the coronavirus pandemic. Upcoming webinars include April 23 from 3:00-5:00pm EST on “[Academic Job Search: Applying](#),” and April 23 from 1:00-2:00pm EST on “[Holistic Health: Self-Care Assessment and Plan](#).” Visit the [OITE “Upcoming Events” page](#) for the full calendar.

Webinar: The Need for Science Advocacy and How to Get Started – May 6

The American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) is hosting the first in a series of advocacy-themed webinars on Wednesday, May 6 at 12:00 pm EST titled, “Becoming an ASHG Advocate.” This initial webinar will highlight why advocating for genetics and genomics research is important and present several examples of how one can get involved in advocacy. Visit the [event website](#) for more information and to register.

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.*