



THE AD HOC GROUP FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Ad Hoc Group Weekly COVID-19 Follow Up

April 30, 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

DeGette, Upton Lead House Letter Urging Supplemental Research Funding

Reps. Diana DeGette (D-Colo.) and Fred Upton (R-Mich.) led [an April 29 letter](#) with nearly 200 bipartisan colleagues urging Congressional leadership to include \$26 billion to support federal research agencies in a future COVID-19 supplemental spending bill. The representatives highlighted the pandemic's impacts on the research enterprise and urged additional funding to cover supplements for grants and contracts, support core research facilities, and fund additional graduate student and postdoctoral fellowships and traineeships.

House Labor-HHS Subcommittee Hearing on COVID-19 Response

The House Labor-HHS appropriations subcommittee [will hold a hearing](#) on Wednesday, May 6 at 10:00am titled, "COVID-19 Response." The hearing will be webcast.

NIH Launches Innovation Initiative for COVID-19 Diagnostics

The NIH on April 29 issued a news release [announcing a new initiative](#) "aimed at speeding innovation, development and commercialization of COVID-19 testing technologies, a pivotal component needed to return to normal during this unprecedented global pandemic." NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, also [wrote on his blog](#) about the Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics (RADx) initiative, supported by funds received in the most recent interim spending package, the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act ([P.L. 116-139](#)). "RADx is an urgent call for science and engineering's most inventive and visionary minds—from the basement to the board room—to develop rapid, easy-to-use testing technologies for SARS-CoV-2," says Collins.

NIH Clinical Trial Shows Remdesivir Accelerates COVID-19 Recovery

NIH published an April 29 [press release](#) reporting preliminary analysis indicating a faster recovery compared to placebo for COVID-19 patients who received the antiviral drug remdesivir in a clinical trial. The Adaptive COVID-19 Treatment Trial (ACTT), sponsored by NIAID, is the first U.S. trial to investigate experimental COVID-19 therapies.

“Preliminary results indicate that patients who received remdesivir had a 31% faster time to recovery than those who received placebo ($p < 0.001$),” though the survival benefit is not statistically significant in the preliminary analysis.

NIDA Director’s Blog: Stigma and Addiction

National Institutes of Drug Abuse (NIDA) Director Nora Volkow, MD, published an [April 22 blog post](#), “Addressing the Stigma that Surrounds Addiction.” Dr. Volkow discusses the ongoing challenges to reduce stigmatization of individuals with substance use disorders and added that the COVID-19 pandemic may amplify stigmas. “In addition to their greater risk through homelessness and drug use itself, the legitimate fear around contagion may mean that bystanders or even first responders will be reluctant to administer naloxone to people who have overdosed,” Volkow warns.

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

ASM Op-Ed and Updated Resources

The American Society for Microbiology CEO Dr. Stefano Bertuzzi and ASM President Dr. Robin Patel penned an [April 27 op-ed in the New York Times](#) calling for a “New Kind of National Guard” --- a rapid response force of microbiologists and other scientists who can help reinforce the health care system during pandemics. ASM regularly updates its [COVID-19 Resources page](#), and has launched a [COVID-19 Research Registry](#) and has developed a [FAQ on COVID-19 testing](#).

Requests for Public Comment

NIDA Seeks Feedback on a Standard THC Dose for Research – May 1

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) in March issued a request for information [“Inviting Comments on the Establishment and Implementation of a Standard Unit Dose of](#)

[Δ-9-tetrahydrocannabinol \(THC\) for Cannabis Research.](#)” NIDA seeks information from stakeholders on 5mg as a standard dose, plusses and minuses of conducting research using a standard dose, and other issues important to researchers related to a standard THC dose for research. Responses must be submitted electronically via: THCdoseRFI@nih.gov.

NCCIH Seeks Feedback on Strategic Plan – June 30

NIH’s National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) issued an April 27 [request for information](#) on the Center’s five-year strategic plan. According to the RFI, “The NCCIH is developing a new strategic plan to guide the Center’s research efforts and priority setting for 2021 through 2026. Seeking input into the strategic planning process is critical for identification and consideration of research areas and topics to be included in the new plan. NCCIH is requesting input in any or all of 9 topic areas.” [Comments are due](#) by June 30.

NIDDK Seeks Feedback on Strategic Plan – July 31

NIH’s National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) issued a March 16 [request for information](#) on the institute’s five-year strategic plan. According to the RFI, “The goal of the process is to develop a broad vision for accelerating research into the causes, prevention, and treatment of diseases and conditions within the Institute’s mission,” and focuses on five broad themes for community input. [Comments are due](#) by July 31.

Upcoming Events

NIH OITE Hosts Webinar Series on Trainee Wellness – Week of April 27

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 “[Discussion for Building Resilience: Managing Addictive Habits](#)” on May 1 from 10:00 – 11:00 am ET, and “[Pre-/post-publication peer review](#)” on May 1 from 2:00 – 3:00 pm ET. 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.

Nominations Requested: 2020 Golden Goose Award to Recognize COVID-19 Research – May 22

The Golden Goose Award Steering Committee is requesting nominations for the 2020 award cycle to recognize individuals and teams whose federally funded research is contributing significantly to the response to COVID-19. The committee is seeking nominations that highlight outstanding scientific and technological research, originally focused elsewhere, that is now being redirected to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

More information, including nomination criteria and the submission form, can be found [here](#). Nominations should be submitted by May 22, 2020.

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.*