Ad Hoc Group Weekly Round Up
May 3, 2021

Thank you for following along with updates for the NIH advocacy community during this busy year in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have decided to return to our regular schedule of a once-weekly newsletter update, to be delivered on Mondays. As always, please forward any relevant items to Christa Wagner for inclusion in the publication!

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:

**Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research @fundNIH – April 26**

Thanks to @RepEBJ @RepDianaDeGette @RepFredUpton @RepAnnaEshoo & @RepAGonzalez for calling on the Biden admin to provide #researchrecovery by supporting the #RISEAct!

**Op-Ed: For Future Medical Breakthroughs, We Must Rebuild Research Lost to COVID**

Leaders from the academic medicine community outlined the challenges that the pandemic has posed for the research workforce and for projects unrelated to COVID-19 in an April 27 op-ed in The Hill.

“The pandemic, while demonstrating the ability of science to save lives, threatens to erode our nation’s scientific progress. As President Biden and Congress discuss important and necessary infrastructure proposals, we urge them to also protect ongoing research by providing federal agencies with supplemental funding to support studies interrupted by COVID-19,” they wrote.

“The pandemic has taught us that investment in research pays huge dividends, sometimes in unexpected ways. We must invest in our research infrastructure to regain our momentum and ensure that we do not impede the scientific pipeline of discoveries or lose the next generation of scientists,” the authors concluded.

**Biden Discusses ARPA-H in Address to Joint Session of Congress**

President Biden addressed a joint session of Congress on April 28 where he described the second proposal of his two-part infrastructure and economic recovery plan. The American Families Plan is a $1.8 trillion recovery plan that includes investments in
health coverage, education, childcare, and family and medical leave. While the American Families Plan does not note specific investments in the NIH, Biden highlighted his ARPA-H proposal as an effort to develop breakthroughs to address cancer, diabetes, and Alzheimer’s disease. “I know of nothing that is more bipartisan. So, let’s end cancer as we know it. … It’s within our power to do it,” Biden said.

NIH Director Testifies at Energy & Commerce Hearing on COVID-19 Long Haulers
NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, along with a CDC witness and experts from academic medicine, testified before the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee in an April 28 hearing titled, “The Long Haul: Forging a Path Through the Lingering Effects of COVID-19.” Collins outlined the agency’s planned research efforts to better understand post-acute sequelae of SARS-CoV-2 (PASC) or “long COVID”, initiated by a $1.15 billion investment Congress provided in 2020 year-end spending package. The NIH received nearly 300 grant proposals in response to NIH’s PASC funding opportunity announcement earlier this year and plans to make awards “in the next few weeks.”

In his testimony, Collins described important research parameters to better understand long-term COVID-19 effects, including recruiting tens of thousands of patients with diversity across gender, age, race, as well as treatment regimen for primary SARS-CoV-2 infection. “To do this complex kind of recruitment rapidly, we are launching a meta-cohort: essentially leveraging some existing cohorts…as well as forming new ones that we can knit together in ways that make their data comparable and collectively powerful for answering pressing questions about this virus,” Collins said. This includes leveraging NIH’s All of Us research program as well as existing COVID-19 clinical trials cohorts.

OSTP Director Nominee Testifies Before Senate Commerce Committee
The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation convened a confirmation hearing for Eric S. Lander, PhD, to be director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) on April 29. President Biden has elevated the role of OSTP director to a cabinet level position. Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) addressed President Biden’s ARPA-H proposal to establish a directed biomedical research program within the NIH. Lander embraced the proposal and added that the proposed work of ARPA-H would encompass projects that fall outside the scope of NIH’s traditional basic research grants and that may not be sufficiently developed to attract industry investment. Lander said that such an organization belongs within the NIH to avoid duplication and competition, and that NIH’s COVID-19 response does show the agency’s ability to pivot and take on “bold” initiatives.

Committee members also raised concerns about previous interactions between Lander, his employer The Broad Institute, and the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. The Committee is next expected to vote on Lander’s nomination. Sen. Duckworth noted that the hearing record would remain open for additional questions from committee members until May 13.

WaPo: NIH-CDC Initiative Investigates At-Home Testing to Slow COVID-19 Spread
NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, described a research study to prevent COVID-19 by distributing 2 million at-home tests to 80,000 families in rural North Carolina and Tennessee, led by the NIH and the CDC in an April 26 Washington Post article. The study hypothesizes that increased at-home testing will catch new infections earlier and prevent community spread. “We could really change the game here,” Collins said. “Even after we get to a high level of vaccination, we will still not be 100 percent, so testing is going to be with us for quite a long time.”

**NIH to Invest $29 Million to Address COVID-19 Disparities**

The NIH announced $29 million in additional investments in the Community Engagement Alliance (CEAL) Against COVID-19 Disparities in an April 29 news release. The additional funds will go to 10 new research groups, following initial awards to 11 groups in 2020, to engage local communities most impacted by COVID-19 to coordinate educational outreach, raise awareness about the importance of inclusive participation in COVID-19 testing, vaccine uptake, and clinical trials, and conduct research to understand barriers surrounding prevention and treatment.” Gary Gibbons, MD, director of NIH’s National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) added, “alliance is designed to meet people where they are with the help of trusted messengers, including family doctors, pastors, and community health workers, and to forge lasting partnerships to address health disparities.”

**Upcoming Events**

**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.

**Symposium on Integrating Sex and Gender into Biomedical Research as a Path for Better Science and Innovation – May 11-12**

The NIH Office of Research on Women’s Health (ORWH) is convening the fifth annual Vivian Pinn Symposium (VPS) to communicate broadly about sex and gender influences on health and diseases, to disseminate research on the health of women, and to highlight pressing issues in women’s health. The topic for the 2021 Symposium is “Integrating Sex and Gender into Biomedical Research as a Path for Better Science and Innovation.” Registration information will be here when available for this public, virtual symposium.

**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.
Senate LHHS FY 2022 Outside Witness Testimony Deadline - June 24
The Senate Labor-HHS Subcommittee has posted a deadline of June 24 for outside witness testimony for FY 2022. Additional details on the format and submission instructions are on the subcommittee 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.

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

American Urological Association Seeks Payment Policy Manager
The American Urological Association (AUA), the premier urologic association providing support to the urologic community, is currently searching for a Payment Policy Manager located primarily in our Linthicum, Maryland office. This position partners with the Director of Policy & Advocacy on the alignment of the AUA, AUAER, and Urology Care Foundation’s policy strategies and advocacy messaging in conjunction with medical societies, federal agencies, and coalitions. Liaises with a core team of advocacy partners and a consultant to promote the AUA’s policy priorities around physician payment. 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.