



THE AD HOC GROUP FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Ad Hoc Group Weekly COVID-19 Follow Up

May 7, 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

Markey, Tillis Lead Senate Letter Urging Supplemental Research Funding

Senators Ed Markey (D-Mass.) and Thom Tillis (R-N.C.) [led a May 4 letter](#) with 31 bipartisan colleagues urging Congressional leadership to include \$26 billion to support federal research agencies in a future COVID-19 supplemental spending bill. Senators 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 Holds Hearing on Next Steps in COVID-19 Response

The House Labor-HHS appropriations subcommittee met on May 6 to hear testimony on next steps in the COVID-19 response from former CDC Director Tom Frieden, MD, MPH, and Caitlin Rivers, PhD, MPH, Senior Scholar, Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. Dr. Frieden [unveiled a recommendation](#) to establish Health Defense Operations (HDO) budget operations to exempt specific health-related funds from budget caps during the appropriations process, which Ranking Member Tom Cole (R-Okla.) described as "a very good idea," before noting that he has had similar caps exemptions discussions with other members of the committee ([see CQ](#), subscription required).

Themes from questions raised by the seven subcommittee members in attendance focused on balancing the health of the public and the economy in reopening the country, including the availability and capacity for testing, contact tracing, health care capacity, and the effects of secondary health consequences like substance use disorder, anxiety, and depression.

Senate HELP Hearing on COVID-19 Testing – May 7

The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee [will hold a hearing](#) on Thursday, May 7, at 10:00am titled, "Shark Tank: New Tests for COVID-19." NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, and Acting Director of the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority (BARDA) Gary Disbrow, PhD, will testify.

Ad Hoc Group Community COVID-19 Updates and Resources

Please share your organization's recommendation letters, sign-on letters, and resources related to COVID-19 with Christa Wagner (chwagner@aamc.org) for inclusion in the Thursday COVID-19 Follow Up!

AIRI Presents Dr. Anthony Fauci with 2020 Public Service Award

Last month, the Association of Independent Research Institutes ([AIRI](#)) awarded Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), with the [2020 AIRI Public Service Award](#). As the nation's top expert on infectious disease, Dr. Fauci has used his role as a leader on the White House Coronavirus Task Force to ensure the nation's federal, state, and local government leaders make decisions for the country based on scientific evidence. Dr. Fauci has taken time to field interviews in order to communicate the gravity of the pandemic and the need for the American public to do their part to stop the spread of COVID-19. The Public Service Award is presented to exemplary leaders who demonstrate a strong commitment to biomedical research. Past recipients include Kelvin Droegemeier, Francis Collins, Vice President Joe Biden, and Bill Gates, among others. AIRI is honored to award Dr. Fauci our highest honor for his service to public health, biomedical research, and the nation.

Sign-On Letter for Research Protections for Non-Profits

The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research and National Multiple Sclerosis Society sent a [May 5 letter](#) to Senate leadership for national organizations to encourage Congress to provide at least \$2 billion in bridge funding to assure the stalled research supported by non-profit organizations, voluntary health associations, science societies, and foundations, can resume once researchers return to their labs. The ask of this letter is for funding for already committed research and would not go towards funding new research.

[Please fill out this form](#) to add your organization to the list of signatories for the [letter](#) to House leadership, and for an updated letter to Senate leadership. Ask Leslie or Brittany questions (Leslie.Ritter@nmss.org; bmeyer@michaeljfox.org).

ASBMB Sign-On Letter, Op-Ed in Support of Peer-Reviewed Science

The American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) is [circulating a sign-on letter](#) to President Trump expressing concern over the administration's recent revocation of a peer-reviewed NIH research grant for studies of coronaviruses by EcoHealth Alliance. ASBMB Public Affairs Director Ben Corb also published an April 30 [op-ed in CNN](#) noting concern over the politicization of peer-reviewed science.

Organizations interested in joining the letter can [sign on here](#), and additional questions can be directed to Ben Corb at bcorb@asbmb.org.

ASBMB Podcast with NIGMS Director

National Institute of General Medical Science (NIGMS) Director [Jon Lorsch, PhD](#), [participated in an interview](#) for the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) podcast Pipettes and Politics. Dr. Lorsch discussed current funding

opportunities related to SARS-CoV-2 and new NIH policies to support researchers during the pandemic. Additional episodes can be [found here](#).

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).

Requests for Public Comment

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 May 4

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 - Educational Application Stress”](#) on May 1 from 1:00 – 2:00 pm ET and [“Discussion for Building Resilience: Managing Addictive Habits”](#) on May 8 from 10:00 – 11:00 am ET. Visit the [OITE “Upcoming Events” page](#) for the full calendar.

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.*