

Ad Hoc Group Weekly Round Up – May 8, 2017

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 welcome suggestions from the community for future issues of the Weekly Round-Up. Here's this week's featured tweet:

Pancreatic Cancer Action Network (@PanCAN)

Senate has passed Omnibus w/\$2B increase in @NIH funding! Thanks @RoyBlunt @PattyMurray @SenAlexander @SenatorLeahy for your leadership.

1. Congress Clears FY 2017 Spending Bill with \$2 Billion Increase for NIH

The House May 3, [309-118](#), and Senate May 4, [79-18](#), voted to send to the president the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (H.R. 244), an omnibus spending package funding most of the federal government through September of this year. Shortly thereafter, President Trump [signed](#) the bill. When lawmakers revealed the legislative text, the Ad Hoc Group [released](#) a statement in support of the investment in \$2 billion in NIH funding and thanked lawmakers for “continuing the longstanding bipartisan, bicameral tradition of championing the national commitment to medical research.” Specifically, the bill provides a program level of \$34.084 billion for the NIH, a \$2 billion (6.2 percent) increase over FY 2016 including the \$352 million provided through the 21st Century Cures Act in FY 2017.

2. NIH Announces New Approach to Awarding Grant Funding

On May 2, Lawrence Tabak, DDS, PhD, Principal Deputy Director of the NIH, led a conference call regarding a [coming change](#) in the NIH's grants policies. NIH is proposing to implement a funding cap to limit investigators to the equivalent of three R01 awards based on a new indicator, the “Grant Support Index”, or GSI. In a [statement](#) released after the call, NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD wrote, “This initiative aims to take advantage of new and powerful ways to assess the effectiveness of NIH research investments to be sure that the funds we are given are producing the best results from our remarkable scientific workforce.” Mike Lauer, MD, NIH deputy director for extramural research, also [wrote](#) about the change in his Open Mike blog stating, “We have a responsibility to the public to assure that we are optimizing the use of our limited resources to obtain the maximum impact possible.”

3. NIH and FDA Release Protocol Template for Phase 2 and 3 IND/IDE Clinical Trials

On May 2, National Institutes of Health (NIH) [released](#) two important related items. The first is the [Final NIH-FDA Clinical Trial Template](#) for Phase 2 and 3 IND/IDE Studies. The template aims to assist NIH-funded investigators in preparing clinical trial documents efficiently so that both IRBs and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) can perform speedy reviews. NIH has also released a web-based platform where investigators can utilize the protocol template in an interactive fashion. The [Electronic Protocol Writing Tool](#) allows for a collaborative approach to writing and reviewing protocols. Investigators will be able to use the tool to form a “protocol writing team” and assign different individuals with writing and reviewing roles. All of the above resources can be found on the NIH Office of Science Policy [website](#). To learn more about the importance of these new resources, please read the latest *Under the Poliscopes* [blog](#) by NIH Associate Director for Science Policy Carrie Wolinetz, PhD. For an additional perspective please also see the [statement](#) released by NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD.

4. STAT Opinion: Taking a Ride on the NIH Budget Rollercoaster

In a joint [opinion piece](#) on May 1, Harlan Krumholz, MD, professor at Yale University, and Gregg Gonsalves, PhD, assistant professor at Yale School of Public Health, wrote about the recent “ups and downs” of the NIH budget. “[M]any researchers began worrying about the future of their work. You could almost hear the sigh of relief among scientists after Congress included a \$2 billion increase” in the FY 2017 spending package. Speaking on the NIH cuts proposed in the president’s FY 2018 Budget Blueprint, the authors acknowledge that, “Almost every organization, and the NIH is no exception, has the possibility of reducing waste and increasing efficiency. But that should come through smart planning, not a blindly applied axe.”

5. Forbes Opinion: President’s Budget Should Boost Rather Than Cut Funding For The NIH

On May 3, Mount Sinai Health System President and CEO Kenneth Davis, MD, wrote an [opinion piece](#) in support of NIH funding, urging the Administration to “withdraw its proposal to slash the NIH budget by nearly 20%, and instead request increased funding for the National Institutes of Health.” Dr. Davis goes on to point out that “more than nine of every ten NIH dollars supports scientists at universities, medical schools, research institutions and the National Institutes of Health whose research has the potential to improve health, defeat disease and extend life.”

6. ASM Congressional Briefing on Vaccines

On Tuesday, May 16, at 9 am in 562 Dirksen Senate Office Building, the American Society for Microbiology (ASM) will host a congressional briefing titled, Vaccines: Healthcare’s First Line of Defense. Speakers include Nancy Messonnier, MD, director for the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Bruce G. Gellin, MD, MPH, president, Global Immunization, Sabin Vaccine Institute; and Paul A. Offit, MD, Maurice R. Hilleman Professor of Vaccinology, Professor of Pediatrics at the Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, Division of Infectious Diseases, The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. To register, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/congressional-briefing-tickets-33623890963>

7. National Women’s Health Empowerment Summit

The Coalition for Women’s Health Equity will convene a Women’s Health Empowerment Summit on May 17 from 10 am to 2 pm at the Newseum (555 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, DC) in Washington, DC. The summit will explore the rapidly changing legislative landscape and set advocacy priorities through briefings from government and policy experts. It will include testimonials from patients and medical professionals that will highlight the need to align mobilization efforts. For more information and to register, visit https://secure2.convio.net/wzoa/site/Ticketing?view=Tickets&id=103550&s_src=womensSummit-inlineReg&s_subsrc=advocacy

8. Reminder of Upcoming Senate Labor-HHS Subcommittee Deadline

The Senate Subcommittee deadline to submit outside witness testimony related to FY 2018 appropriations is close of business on June 2. All testimony must be in accordance with the [guidelines](#) set out by the subcommittee.

9. NIH to Hold Council of Councils Meeting in May

The NIH [published](#) a Federal Register Notice regarding a May 26 Council of Councils meeting. The meeting will begin at 8:15 am at the NIH in Building 21, C Wing, 6th floor, Conference Room 10. Among other topics queued up for the meeting, agenda items for the open sessions include a discussion of the

history of the Knockout Mouse Program (KOMP), background on the NIH and federal budget process, progress and plans at the National Institute on Aging (NIA), and the Common Fund Diversity Program. The open session will be videocast and can be accessed from the NIH Videocasting and Podcasting Web site <http://videocast.nih.gov>.

10. Applications Open for the 2017 NIMHD Health Disparities Research Institute

The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) will host the Health Disparities Research Institute (HDRI) from August 14 - 18. The HDRI aims to support the research career development of promising minority health/health disparities research scientists early in their careers and stimulate research in the disciplines supported by health disparities science. The due date for submitting an application is May 12 at 11:59 pm EST. Visit the NIMHD [website](#) for more information.

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 Joe Bañez at jbanez@aamc.org or Tannaz Rasouli at trasouli@aamc.org.