



THE AD HOC GROUP FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Ad Hoc Group Weekly COVID-19 Follow Up

May 28, 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

House to Join Senate in Exempting VA MISSION Act from FY21 Cap

The House Appropriations Committee intends to follow the Senate's lead and exempt the VA MISSION Act from the FY 2021 budget cap according to House Appropriations Committee spokesman Evan Hollander via email to reporters ([BGOV, subscription required](#)). Designating VA MISSION Act funding as emergency spending would exempt about \$11 billion from the FY 2021 nondefense discretionary spending cap. No additional details about the timeline to consider FY 2021 spending bills have been released.

Peer-reviewed Data Shows Remdesivir Improves Time to Recovery from COVID-19

New data from a National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases trial shows that the antiviral drug remdesivir improves outcomes for hospitalized COVID-19 patients on oxygen, according to a [May 22 NIH media advisory](#). Analysis of nearly 1,100 patients showed a statistically significant shorter median time to recovery, and a trend towards a survival benefit for patients treated with remdesivir.

NCCIH NOSI for COVID-19 Research

The [National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health \(NCCIH\) released a Notice of Special Interest](#) (NOSI) related to availability of additional COVID-19-related research funding on May 26. The additional NCCIH funding aims to "promote research on the effects of natural products alone or in combination with other complementary and integrative health approaches on SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19."

NINDS Director Recognizes Stroke Awareness Month

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke Director Walter J. Koroshetz, MD, summarized 50 years of progress towards improving stroke treatments and outcomes and the connection between stroke and other diseases like COVID-19 in a [May 26 Director's Message](#). Koroshetz also noted NINDS's ongoing efforts to study COVID-19's effects on the nervous system, including a newly established database to collect clinical information on neurological symptoms in COVID-19 patients.

NIH Releases Strategic Plan on Nutrition Research

NIH released the [2020-2030 Strategic Plan for NIH Nutrition Research](#), “a multidisciplinary approach through expanded collaboration across NIH Institutes and Centers to accelerate nutrition science and uncover the role of human nutrition in improving public health and reducing disease,” according to [NIH’s May 27 media advisory](#). The strategic plan has four main goals: spur discovery and innovation through foundational research; investigate the role of dietary patterns and behaviors for optimal health; define the role of nutrition across the lifespan; and reduce the burden of disease in clinical settings. Progress towards these goals will be guided by NIH’s Nutrition Research Task Force.

NIMH Releases Strategic Plan for Research

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) Director Joshua Gordon, MD, PhD, shared details of NIMH’s newly released Strategic Plan for Research in a [May 22 blog post](#). The [five-year plan](#) focuses on research opportunities and “attempted to identify areas where NIMH-funded science can have the greatest impact.” The four main goals are: define the brain mechanisms underlying complex behaviors; examine mental illness trajectories across the lifespan; strive for prevention and cures; and strengthen the public health impact of NIMH-supported research.

Ad Hoc Group Community COVID-19 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!

Survey: Cancer Patients Increasingly Face COVID-19 Health Impact

A survey from the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACSAN) details several ways in which COVID-19 has impacted care for cancer patients and survivors, according to a [May 27 press release](#) and [survey memo](#). Specifically, the survey found that of the more than 1,200 respondents, nearly 80% face delays in their health care, 25% report difficulties contacting their providers, and approximately 50% report financial strain, among other findings.

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).

Upcoming Events

BRAIN Initiative Investigators Meeting – June 1-2

The sixth annual [BRAIN Initiative Investigators Meeting](#) will take place virtually on June 1-2. The open meeting convenes BRAIN Initiative awardees, representatives from contributing federal agencies and participating non-federal agencies, as well as members of the public. [Click here to register.](#)

Virtual Briefing on COVID and the Brain – June 3

The Society for Neuroscience and American Brain coalition are co-hosting a virtual Congressional Neuroscience Caucus Briefing ([flyer attached](#)) examining how those exposed to COVID-19 could face a heightened risk for a range of brain diseases and disorders, from depression and psychosis to immune and olfactory complications of the central nervous system. The virtual briefing will take place on Wednesday, June 3, from 3:00-4:00pm EST. [Please register 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.*