

Ad Hoc Group Weekly Round Up – October 8, 2018

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:

[Association of Public and Land-grant Universities @APLU News](#)

“Congratulations to [@Mizzou](#)'s Dr. George Smith on his Nobel Prize in chemistry! Dr. Smith developed a groundbreaking method of evolving proteins. He is the first University of Missouri Professor to receive a Nobel Prize for university-based research.”

1. Nobel Prize for Chemistry Awarded to NIH Grantees

The 2018 Nobel Prize for Chemistry was [awarded](#) Oct. 3 to Frances Arnold, PhD, of the California Institute of Technology, for the directed evolution of enzymes, and to George Smith, PhD, of the University of Missouri, Columbia, who shares the prize with Gregory Winter of University of Cambridge, UK, for the phage display of peptides and antibodies. NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, noted, “Today's Nobel winners in chemistry demonstrate the essential nature of basic research to medical breakthroughs ... The human benefits from the taxpayer's investment in basic research through NIH are enormous.”

2. NIH Scientist Named Federal Employee of the Year

Dan Kastner, MD, PhD, scientific director of NIH's National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), has been named [2018 Federal Employee of the Year](#) by the non-profit Partnership for Public Service. Dr. Kastner, who has worked at NIH since 1985, was honored for research on the genetics of autoinflammatory diseases. The award is one of the Samuel J. Heyman [Service to America Medals](#), or the “Sammies.” NHGRI Director Eric Green, MD, PhD remarked that “Dan's remarkable scientific and clinical accomplishments - as a researcher and a practicing physician - have been truly inspirational, advancing the field of genomics and bringing hope and relief to his many patients.”

3. NIH Director Shares Thoughts on Opioid Addiction, Chronic Pain

The week of Oct. 1, NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, shared his thoughts on opioid addiction, chronic pain, and the need for new solutions. In a [USA Today op-ed insert](#), Dr. Collins shared updates on how the NIH HEAL Initiative is working to overcome the challenges of the opioid crisis. In a separate [interview with USA Today](#), Dr. Collins touched on challenges with existing treatment programs, noting that “patients often drop out [of medication-assisted treatment] due to challenges such as lack of transportation or job requirements that make a daily trip to the methadone clinic difficult.”

4. NIH Director Discusses Future of Personalized Medicine

NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, participated in the [Oct. 3 Atlantic Festival](#), sharing updates on the future of personalized medicine. In an hour-long discussion with science journalist Ed Yong, Dr. Collins shared a basic understanding of precision medicine, its impacts on cancer treatment and medication prescribing practices, the future of personalized preventive measures, and participation in research such as the All of Us Research Program.

5. NIH Announces 2018 Director's Awards for High-Risk, High-Reward Research

The NIH announced 89 [High-Risk, High-Reward awards](#) that fund "extraordinarily creative scientists proposing highly innovative research to address major challenges in biomedical science." The awards, granting an estimated \$282 million over 5 years, are managed by the NIH Common Fund. The grants include: 10 Pioneer Awards, 58 New Innovator Awards, 10 Transformative Research Awards, and 11 Early Independence Awards.

6. NIH Director's Blog: Building a 3D Map of the Genome

NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, Oct. 4 [posted on his blog](#) an update on new techniques to study how DNA is packaged into cell nuclei. Recent NIH-funded research from the University of Illinois developed a new way to identify DNA located close to nuclear markers, or speckles, and sequence those specific regions of the genome. Dr. Collins notes that more research is needed, but preliminary results suggest "that a small shift in the position of a particular gene within the nucleus could have dramatic effects on that gene's level of activity, with the potential perhaps to transform a healthy cell into a diseased one and vice versa."

7. NIH Grant Application Questions Answered

The NIH Center for Scientific Review (CSR) [produced two videos](#) to provide "insights into how [grant] applications are reviewed" and to answer common questions from applicants in order to help explain the peer review process and produce higher success rates for applicants.

Upcoming Hill Briefings and Events

8. Research!America Briefing on Oral Health – Oct. 10

Recent research suggests that oral health is closely tied to overall physical health, and poor oral health could play a role in a wide range of health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and adverse pregnancy outcomes. Join Research!America and partners Colgate and the American Association for Dental Research for a briefing titled "Oral Health is Systemic Health", which will cover the benefits of treating periodontitis on overall health, the need for continued research in this field, and the public health implications of unmet oral health needs.

Participants include Martha J. Somerman, DDS, PhD, Director, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR); Maria Ryan, PhD, Vice President and Chief Dental Officer, Colgate Palmolive Company; Marko Vujicic, PhD, Chief Economist & Vice President, Health Policy Institute, American Dental Association; Beth Truett, BS, M.Div, President, Oral Health America (Moderator).

Please contact Sara Chang at schang@researchamerica.org to RSVP.

9. NIEHS Hill Briefing: A Healthy Start for Every Child – Oct. 10

Please join the Friends of NIEHS for a U.S. Congress briefing titled, "A Healthy Start for Every Child: How the Environment Influences Health and Development," featuring NIEHS Director Linda

Birnbaum, PhD. The event will take place Wednesday, October 10, 2018 12:30p.m. – 2:00pm p.m. in the Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2045. Please RSVP to dcrsvp@thoracic.org and see the attached invitation for more information.

10. Panel Study of Income Dynamics 50th Anniversary Reception – Oct. 18

Please join the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) in celebrating its 50th anniversary during an Oct. 18th reception. The event will take place at the Newseum from 6:30 – 9pm. Please RSVP to pathall@umich.edu and see the attached flyer for additional details.

11. NASEM: Upcoming Meeting on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Academia

The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) will [convene leaders](#), including “academic leaders, Title IX and diversity officers, ombudsmen, researchers in sexual harassment, and leaders from professional societies, foundations, and federal agencies, to discuss strategies and share promising practices” to discuss sexual harassment in academia. The meeting will be held Nov. 9, 2018, from 9:00am – 5:00pm at the National Academies in Washington DC, and will focus on developing strategies on how to prevent sexual harassment in academia.

12. Learn Serve Lead – Nov. 2-6, 2018

Learn Serve Lead 2018 - the AAMC Annual Meeting - is open for registration. The Nov. 2-6 event takes place in Austin, Texas, and will draw 4,500-plus attendees including a wide range of stakeholders. In addition to [four plenary sessions](#), including Grit author and researcher Angela Duckworth, PhD, and civil and women’s rights leader Anita Hill, JD, there are more than 130 concurrent sessions. Some of the slated sessions include:

- Improving Population Health Through Learner-Engaged Research
- Rightsizing Research Infrastructure
- Achieving Health Equity through Research: Innovations From NIMHD-Funded Science
- Unhealthy Politics: The Battle over Evidence-Based Medicine

[Registration](#) is available online through Thursday, Nov. 1.

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.