Ad Hoc Group Weekly COVID-19 Follow Up  
November 12, 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 and general updates. As always, please forward any relevant items to Christa Wagner (chwagner@aamc.org) for inclusion in the publication!

Congressional and NIH News

Senate Republicans Release FY 2021 Labor-HHS Spending Bill

The Senate Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee Republicans released an explanatory statement and text of their FY 2021 spending bill on November 10, including a total of $43.7 billion for NIH, a $2 billion (4.8%) increase over the comparable FY 2020 level. The press statement and highlights prepared by the committee staff are available.

Senate Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) released a statement noting the bipartisan efforts reflected in the 12 appropriations bills, but added, “The Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education bill is woefully inadequate to meet today’s challenges, even if we were not in a global pandemic.”

The Ad Hoc Group released a press statement in response to the draft FY 2021 Labor-HHS spending bill, expressing appreciation to Subcommittee Chair Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) for his leadership in providing another meaningful increase in the NIH’s base budget, praising the bipartisan support for NIH, and urging Congress to quickly enact at least a $2 billion increase for FY 2021 and at least $15.5 billion in emergency supplemental funding to combat COVID-19.

President-elect Biden Names Transition Agency Review Teams

President-elect Biden announced volunteer members of agency review teams on November 10, including 30 members of the Health and Human Services review team. “Agency review teams are responsible for understanding the operations of each agency, ensuring a smooth transfer of power, and preparing for President-elect Biden and Vice President-elect Harris and their cabinet to hit the ground running on Day One,” stated the press release.

McConnell, Schumer Re-Elected to Leadership Positions

The Senate held leadership elections for the 117th Congress on November 10, maintaining Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) as the top Republican and Democrat, respectively, in the Senate. Politico reported that both parties maintained much of the leadership from the 116th Congress in the several additional leadership roles.
Treatments for People with Early COVID-19 Infection an Urgent NIH Focus

Treatments for early COVID-19 infection, before progression to severe disease, are urgently needed, according National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) Director Anthony Fauci, MD. A November 11 NIH news release summarized Fauci’s recent JAMA Viewpoint which pointed to the importance of these therapeutics in speeding patient recovery, reducing the likelihood of developing severe disease, and subsequently reducing demand on the health care system. Studies into repurposing existing antivirals for early disease are underway.

NIH Calls on Clinical Researchers to Swiftly Share COVID-19 Results

NIH Director Francis Collins, MD, PhD, issued a November 10 statement calling on clinical researchers involved in coronavirus clinical trials to share their results “as swiftly as possible” to maintain the fast-paced development of diagnostic tests and treatments, and the launching of clinical trials against COVID-19. Collins highlighted several ways NIH has worked to speed access to COVID-19 information, including prioritizing COVID-19 submissions to clinicaltrials.gov. "The scientific community bears collective responsibility for expediting the dissemination of knowledge from NIH-funded research. Doing so will bring COVID-19 treatments and vaccines to the American public and the world as quickly as possible,” stated Collins.

Upcoming Events

NIH Council of Councils Meeting – November 13

The NIH Council of Councils will meet on Friday, November 13, from 2-3pm for a presentation and discussion of the draft NIH-Wide Strategic Plan (2021-2025). The virtual meeting will be webcast.

March of Dimes Briefing on Maternal and Infant Health – November 17

March of Dimes invites you to join "Making the Grade on Maternal and Infant Health: 2020 March of Dimes Report Card Virtual Briefing,” on Tuesday, November 17 from 10:00am—11:30am. The briefing will explore a comprehensive view on the current state of maternal and infant health. The Report Card has new and exciting features, including key data on infant and maternal mortality, and disparity ratio data to delve into the causes and possible policy solutions to solve the maternal and infant health crisis. Register here—spaces are filling quickly! For questions about the briefing please contact Venicia Gray at: vgray@marchofdimes.org.

NEW R!A Virtual Discussion on RNAi for Rare Diseases – November 19

Please join Research!America as they host a virtual panel discussion, “From Nobel Winning Science to Next Generation Treatment: Tracing the Path of a Rare Disease Breakthrough using RNAi.” Participants will explore the impact of RNAi technology in addressing unmet medical needs and demonstrate the symbiotic roles of the public and
private sectors. The discussion will take place on November 19 at 11am EST. Please register here.

**AEVR Briefing on Thyroid Eye Disease – November 19**

Please join the Alliance for Eye and Vision Research (AEVR) as it continues its series of educational briefings on November 19 at 12:00pm with a virtual briefing, “Thyroid Eye Disease: What Have We Learned Through Research?” Please see attached flyer for additional information and register here to receive information for joining the webinar.

**Apply for HIV Clinical Training Opportunities – January 19, 2021**

The HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) and the Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) Foundation are accepting applications for the 2021 HIV Clinical Fellowship Program. For the first time, the program is supporting one year of HIV clinical training for full or half-time effort awards to allow greater flexibility for physicians to train in community-based settings. The award supports a stipend of $33,000 for half-time training or $65,000 for full-time, plus funding to cover fringe benefits. Physicians whose communities are underrepresented in medicine or who interested in working in the Southeastern United States are strongly encouraged to apply. Program and application requirements are on the HIVMA website, including recommended competencies for HIVMA Clinical Fellows. The deadline to apply is Jan. 19, 2021. For more information, please email HIVMA.

**SOBC Capstone Conference – February 22-23**

This capstone research conference will celebrate ten years of the NIH Science of Behavior Change (SOBC) Common Fund Program. The goal of the SOBC program is to advance behavior change research through a focus on mechanisms of change and the integration of basic research with applied/interventional research. The capstone conference will highlight innovative examples of behavior change research consistent with SOBC principles, from use-inspired basic research to mechanisms-focused intervention science. The capstone conference on February 22-23 will be virtual, open to the public, recorded, archived, and proceedings summarized in a publicly accessible report. The agenda, speaker information, and a link to registration will be available on this website in the coming months.

**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.

**HHS COVID-19 awards tracking website** including data on awards made by all HHS awarding agencies with supplemental appropriations.

## Job Postings

**Epilepsy Foundation Seeks Research Program Manager**
The primary responsibilities of the Research Program Manager include: Coordinating the development and delivery of the Epilepsy Digital Engagement Navigator (EDEN); developing engagement strategies, and work with our platform partner to ensure data is entered in the platform in an interpretable manner under the direction of the Director of Innovation and the CMIO; working with research clinical coordinator in the Human Epilepsy Project 2 study; assisting with analysis of research data sets by pulling and analyze various query requests from research data sets existing within the Foundation; and maintaining the web informational research tools such as the pipeline tracker. [Click here to see the full job posting and apply.](#)

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**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](mailto:chwagner@aamc.org) or Tannaz Rasouli at [trasouli@aamc.org](mailto:trasouli@aamc.org).