Ad Hoc Group Weekly COVID-19 Follow Up
November 19, 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

FY21 Topline Spending Negotiations Ongoing, Congressional Leaders Push for Omnibus

House and Senate appropriators have been negotiating topline spending levels for all 12 FY 2021 spending bills in hopes of finalizing bipartisan bills by the December 11 continuing resolution (CR) deadline. In press reports on November 18 (BGOV, subscription required), Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) expressed hope that negotiations on the topline funding levels would conclude by the end of this week. Both McConnell and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) are on the record with a preference to pass an omnibus spending bill by year’s end rather than a longer term CR. Senate Appropriations Chair Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) reported that White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows indicated in a meeting that the administration would be open to supporting an omnibus.

Pelosi, Schumer Urge McConnell to Negotiate on COVID-19 Relief

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) urged Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) to engage with them in negotiations on a new bipartisan, bicameral COVID-19 relief package in a November 17 letter. “The COVID-19 pandemic and economic recession will not end without our help. It is essential that this bill have sufficient funding and delivers meaningful relief to the many Americans who are suffering. For the sake of the country, we ask that you come to the table and work with us to produce an agreement that meets America’s needs in this critical time,” states the letter.

House Leadership Election Results

Both House Democrats and Republicans held elections for leadership posts in the 117th Congress this week. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) ran unchallenged to become House Speaker, and will need to win a simple majority of the full House of Representatives to confirm her position in January. Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) and Rep. James Clyburn (D-S.C.) retained their spots as Majority Leader and Majority Whip, respectively. Rep. Katherine Clark (D-
Mass.) was elected as Assistant Speaker and Rep. Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.) retained his post as House Democratic Caucus Chair.

Republicans re-elected Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) to the Minority Leader role. Also reelected were House Republican Whip Steve Scalise (R-La.) and Rep. Liz Cheney (R-Wyo.) as chair of the House Republican Conference.

**WaPo: Dolly Parton Helped Fund Moderna’s COVID-19 Vaccine**

Country singer Dolly Parton donated $1 million to coronavirus research at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in April 2020, spurred by a scientific curiosity encouraged by her Vanderbilt physician Dr. Naji Abumrad, reported Washington Post on November 18.

Parton’s donation went partially to funding the biotechnology company Moderna’s experimental coronavirus vaccine, which this week reported 95% effectiveness in preventing COVID-19. “Without a doubt in my mind, her funding made the research toward the vaccine go 10 times faster than it would be without it,” said Abumrad. In an NBC interview, Parton said, “I’m just happy that anything I do can help somebody else, and when I donated the money to the COVID fund, I just wanted it to do good,” she said. “Evidently, it is. Let’s just hope we find a cure real soon.”

**New NEI Director Sworn In**

The new National Eye Institute (NEI) Director Michael Chiang, MD, was sworn in on November 16. Dr. Chiang comes to NEI from Oregon Health & Science University, where his research focused on developing and applying biomedical informatics methods to clinical ophthalmology in areas such as retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), telehealth, artificial intelligence, clinical information systems, genotype-phenotype correlation, and data analytics. Additional information on Dr. Chiang is available on NEI’s website.

**Upcoming Events**

**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
NEW Apply for Medical Student HIV, Infectious Diseases Research Grants – February 5

The Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) Foundation and HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) seek applications for the G.E.R.M (Grants for Emerging Researchers/Clinicians Mentorship) Program for the 2021-2022 cycle. The program provides grants to medical students to support a mentored clinical learning and/or research project for up to a year, on infectious diseases and HIV related topics under the mentorship of an IDSA or HIVMA member. Applicants must be medical students (first, second or third year) from an accredited allopathic or osteopathic medical school in the U.S. Application information is available from the IDSA Foundation website. Awardees receive a $4,000 stipend to complete their project. The deadline to apply is February 5, 2021. Please email HIVMA staff with questions.

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.](#)

---

**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.