Ad Hoc Group Weekly Round Up
March 7, 2022

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:

American Association for Cancer Research @AACR – March 3

Post-docs, students, medical trainees, and young scientists are the future of #CancerResearch. Their success depends on robust, sustained, and predictable funding increases for @NIH. Show your support of early-career scientists at https://bit.ly/3sDR5c7 #AACRontheHill

Congress Continues FY22, Supplemental Negotiations Ahead of March 11 Deadline

Congressional negotiators continued their work over the weekend of March 5-6 to finalize a FY 2022 omnibus spending package including the consideration of emergency spending to support Ukraine and to aid in the ongoing and future COVID-19 response. Punchbowl News reported that House Democrats plan to file the omnibus by Tuesday, March 8, in hopes of completing votes in both chambers before the March 11 expiration of the current continuing resolution, which funds the federal government at FY 2021 spending levels.

Both House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) issued Dear Colleague Letters outlining the $10 billion in supplemental funds requested to support humanitarian, military, and economic efforts in Ukraine along with the intent to vote on the omnibus this week. The COVID-19 supplemental request issued by the Office of Management and Budget on March 2 totals $22.5 billion for treatments, rapid tests, vaccines, and masks.

President Delivers First State of the Union Address, Highlighting Health Priorities in “Unity Agenda”

In his first State of the Union address on March 1, President Joe Biden discussed several health care and research priorities, including the administration’s current COVID-19 response efforts and a four-pronged “unity agenda” of bipartisan health-related priorities. In the unity agenda, Biden highlighted what he described as a personal priority to “end cancer as we know it” through continued efforts of the recently
reignited Cancer Moonshot Initiative. Biden also urged Congress to pass legislation to fund his proposed Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H) to advance the administration’s Moonshot goals of cutting the cancer death rate by at least 50% in the next 25 years, in addition to accelerating progress against Alzheimer’s disease, diabetes, and other health threats.

**NSABB Convenes, Charged with Examining Research Policies**
The National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity (NSABB) convened on Feb. 28 to hear updates from the Office of Science and Technology Policy and National Security Council, and to receive a charge from the NIH for upcoming work to review existing policies. Specifically, the NIH has instructed the NSABB to review and evaluate the existing policies regarding dual use research of concern and potential pandemic pathogen care and oversight, including stakeholder input. The efforts are expected to get underway this month with an anticipated consideration of a draft report of the NSABB’s recommendations in December. Acting NIH Director Lawrence Tabak, DDS, PhD, issued a Feb. 28 statement on the charge to the NSABB noting, “Research involving pathogens is vital for ensuring the United States is prepared to rapidly detect, respond to, and recover from future infectious disease threats. Such research can be inherently high risk given the possibility of biosafety lapses or deliberate misuse. … Historically, the NSABB has played an important role in advising the federal government on strengthening oversight of life sciences research, and I want to thank the Board in advance for their expert input.” A recording of the Feb. 28 meeting and related materials are on the NIH’s website.

*Nature*: Hundreds of COVID Trials Could Provide a Deluge of New Drugs
Acting NIH Director Lawrence Tabak, DDS, PhD, provided outcomes from the NIH’s ongoing ACTIV partnership to develop COVID-19 therapeutics and vaccines as part of a March 1 Nature News Feature on new COVID-19 therapies expected in 2022. Tabak noted that ACTIV has supported more than 30 studies of COVID-19 therapies from a list of 800 candidates. He added, “The next three to four months are, we hope, going to be very exciting. Even when a trial does not show efficacy, that’s still incredibly important information. It tells you what not to use.” Relatedly, the article added that more than 100 phase III and IV trials into COVID-19 treatments are ongoing.

**GAO Publishes Fact Sheet on Long COVID**
The Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a 2-page factsheet on long COVID on March 2, which addresses what is known about long COVID, what the knowledge gaps are, and what steps the federal government is taking to fund long COVID research. The factsheet also describes challenges and provides questions for policymakers to consider. According to the factsheet, “long COVID has potentially affected up to 23 million Americans, pushing an estimated 1 million people out of work. The full magnitude of health and economic effects is unknown but is expected to be significant.”

**Upcoming Events**

AEVR Virtual Briefing on Glaucoma and Health Disparities – March 8
Please join the Alliance for Eye And Vision Research (AEVR) as they cohost a virtual Congressional briefing titled, “Understanding Glaucoma Patients: Health Disparities and Unmet Needs.” The briefing will take place during World Glaucoma Week on March 8 at 12pm EST. Please see the attached flyer for details and register here to attend.

**Virtual Briefing “Small Towns/Big Trends: Demographic Insights on Living, Working, and Thriving – March 18**

Please join the virtual congressional briefing “Small Towns/Big Trends: Demographic Insights on Living, Working, and Thriving,” that the Population Association of America is hosting on Friday, March 18, 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. ET. The briefing will feature an expert panel presenting research regarding demographic, economic, health, and environmental challenges and opportunities facing U.S. rural communities from the Interdisciplinary Network on Rural Population Health and Aging (funded by the National Institute on Aging), and the Rural Population Research Network (funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture). More information about the briefing, including a link to register, is available on the PAA home page.

**Requests for Public Comment & Funding Opportunities**

**NIH Funding for Research and Capacity Building Efforts Related to Bioethical Issues – March 17**

The NIH seeks to fund research on ethical considerations related to biomedical research and projects that support capacity building in bioethics. Over the past three years, the NIH Office of the Director has partnered with all of our Institutes and Centers to support projects spanning the wide range of intersections between bioethics and biomedical research. Note that this opportunity applies to both basic and clinical research (and everything in between), from ethical considerations surrounding emerging technologies to developing capacity to further engage research participants as partners in research. Applications will be accepted until March 17, 2022.

Interested in collaborating with a bioethicist or a biomedical researcher to apply? Check out this symposium for tips on establishing partnerships: https://videocast.nih.gov/watch=42402.

**Seeking Public Comment on NIH’s CSR Strategic Plan – March 23**

NIH’s Center for Scientific Review (CSR) seeks public feedback on its 5-year Strategic Plan, which includes five main goals for the peer review process and enhancing diversity in the expert reviewers and CSR staff. Noni Byrnes, PhD, CSR director noted in a Feb. 14 blog that the strategic plan, “will serve as our roadmap as CSR advances its mission of seeing that NIH grant applications receive fair, independent, expert, and timely scientific reviews—free from inappropriate influences—so NIH can fund the most promising research.” Comments on the strategic plan will be accepted through March 23, 2022, through Review Matters or sent to feedback@csr.nih.gov.

**RFI on NIH-Wide Strategic Plan for DEIA – April 3**
The NIH seeks stakeholder feedback on the framework for the NIH-Wide Strategic Plan for Diversity Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). According to the request, The purpose of the NIH-Wide Strategic Plan for DEIA is to articulate NIH’s vision for embracing, integrating, and strengthening DEIA across all NIH activities to achieve the NIH mission. The Strategic Plan will capture activities that NIH will undertake to meet the vision of the Strategic Plan, and will be organized around accomplishments, needs, opportunities, and challenges in addressing DEIA in the NIH workforce, its structure and culture, and the research it supports. Feedback on the plan should be submitted electronically on this website by April 3.

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.

NIH COVID-19 Research Website provides a central location for trusted, up-to-date, accurate information about NIH research and our strategic role in COVID-19 research.

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

Combat COVID website including information for those who have never had COVID-19, have been infected, have recovered, and for health care providers.

Job Postings

**New** Director, ASRM

The American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) recently announced the creation of the ASRM Center for Policy and Leadership (CPL) and seeks a Director. The Director promotes the mission and vision of the ASRM’s CPL and maintains its focus on the organization’s goals, plans and policies. The Director will provide inspirational and collaborative leadership, strategic planning and management to drive the CPL’s impact at the state and national level. Reporting to the Chief Advocacy and Policy Officer the Director will have overall accountability for the strategic, operational and programmatic affairs of the CPL. To learn more about the position or to apply, please e-mail publicaffairs@asrm.org or view the job description.
Director of Policy, ISSCR
The International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISSCR) is seeking a full-time Director of Policy with experience in health policy issues to lead the ISSCR’s international policy and regulatory advocacy program. The ISSCR proactively engages in policy discussions concerning stem cell research and its translation to regenerative medicine at the state, federal, and international levels. The ISSCR’s Policy Director will draw on the organization’s articulation of rigorous professional standards for the conduct of stem cell research and clinical translation and will guide the ISSCR in the deliberation of new policy and regulatory issues. Additional details and application instructions can be found here.

Advocacy and Training Assistant, SfN
The advocacy and training assistant will provide support to all efforts of the SfN Advocacy and Training department. Supports committee activities, provides administrative support to SfN programming such as correspondence and scheduling, payment processing, and supports communication efforts regarding advocacy, policy positions, and training initiatives of the Society. Liaises across the organization for interdepartmental collaboration. To learn more about the position and apply, please click 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.