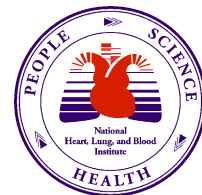


# FYI from the NHLBI



Public Interest News from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Vol. 1, Issue 1, May 2000

## Message from the Director

Welcome to the first edition of *FYI From the NHLBI*, designed to expand communications between the NHLBI, our public interest organizations, and the public at large. Our goal is to provide you with information on such topics as new NHLBI research initiatives, recent research findings, upcoming meetings and events, key congressional activities, and ways to find and use federal biomedical databases.

Obviously, our first issue could not include all of the items and topics that will be of interest to you. Future editions will include articles about our prevention and education activities, the Institute's ongoing intramural and extramural programs, and exciting new projects being undertaken by our Institute. We welcome your suggestions for articles and comments on how we can make this publication more closely fit your needs. Comments may be addressed to [NHLBI.Listens@nih.gov](mailto:NHLBI.Listens@nih.gov).

I am pleased to announce that we also are moving to establish a public liaison site on the NHLBI home page so that you will have easier access to the information that you need. Once we have a draft Web site in place, we will ask you to review it carefully and provide input into its final structure.

We view *FYI From the NHLBI* and the future Web site as the beginning of what we are confident will be a long and fruitful collaboration.

Sincerely yours,

Claude Lenfant, M.D.  
Director

## The NHLBI: Who We Are and What We Do

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) was established by Congress in 1948 as the National Heart Institute. Since those early beginnings, our mission has expanded. We now provide national leadership in fighting not only heart disease, but also diseases of the blood vessels, lungs, and blood. Additionally, we lead the Nation's efforts to ensure safe blood resources and to combat sleep disorders.

The NHLBI exists to plan, conduct, foster, and support integrated and coordinated programs in:

- Basic research
- Clinical investigations and trials
- Observational studies
- Disease prevention and control
- Public, patient, and professional education

We work closely with other research organizations and government agencies. And, we strive to maintain close ties with voluntary agencies and organizations. It is their confidence in us and the unwavering support of the American public that enable our advances in preventing, treating, and curing various diseases. By applying this new knowledge, we can improve the health and quality of life of the American people and provide them with a highly favorable return on their tax-dollar investment.

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## The NHLBI Strives to Enhance Public Participation

On February 9, 2000, representatives from nearly 50 interest groups assembled for the first Public Interest Organization Meeting of the NHLBI. The resulting enthusiastic discussions and thoughtful, constructive comments affirmed the NHLBI's commitment to enhance public involvement and reinforced the NHLBI's ongoing effort to develop similar events and other forums for constituent input.

The diversity of the NHLBI's constituency was apparent at the meeting. Not only were the large, nationally recognized organizations represented, but smaller, "grass-roots" organizations also were actively involved in bringing a broader perspective to the table. The approximately 100 participants engaged in a dynamic interaction, exchanging views and ideas and learning from each other's experiences.

A full summary of the meeting and the participants' suggestions that are under consideration can be viewed at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/meetings/liaison.htm>.

### How the Grant Process Works

The NHLBI occasionally solicits grant applications on specific subjects (for examples, see the Research Initiatives listed on the next page). However, the vast majority of grants awarded by the NHLBI support research projects in areas selected by members of the scientific community. For these research programs, the Institute does not dictate specific program areas, but instead relies on the wealth of creativity within the biomedical research community to generate novel ideas and develop new ways of attacking health problems.

The application for funding requires the investigator to provide detailed information, including a summary of the proposed research, pertinent background information, methods that will be used to accomplish the research, and anticipated outcomes and benefits that will be derived. Applications are reviewed by a "jury" of peers - other scientists with expertise in the field of proposed research. The jury evaluates scientific merits, and applications deemed most promising receive funding.

Successful research relies heavily upon receiving high-quality applications from top-notch scientists. For more information on the grant application process, please visit <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/funding/policies/index.htm>.

## News From Capitol Hill

Every spring, the directors of the National Institutes of Health testify before the House and Senate Appropriations Committees as part of the annual budget cycle that determines funding levels for the following year. The appropriations hearings give each NIH institute and center an opportunity to tell the members of Congress about recent research accomplishments, exciting ongoing studies, and research opportunities that they hope to address in the future. The hearings also allow the members to query the directors about topics in which they hold a personal interest.

On February 17, Dr. Claude Lenfant, Director, NHLBI, testified before the House Appropriations Committee about FY 2001 funding. His full written testimony is available at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/funding/fromdir/cong/open2000.htm>.

Mr. Porter, Committee chair, asked Dr. Lenfant about the use of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to identify heart attack victims quickly in emergency room settings and the widening gap between what we know about diagnosis and treatment of diseases and incorporation of that knowledge into clinical practice. Other members initiated lengthy discussions on efforts to address health disparities that exist in ethnic and racial minorities, as well as in less affluent socioeconomic groups; the rationale for developing gene therapy for sickle cell disease when bone marrow transplantation has been shown to cure it in seriously affected individuals; currently supported clinical trials on prevention of cardiovascular disease in persons with type II diabetes; and the costs and benefits of placing automatic defibrillators in public places for emergency use with victims of sudden cardiac arrest.

On March 30, Dr. Ruth Kirschstein, Acting Director, NIH, testified before the Senate Appropriations Committee. Typically, NIH institute directors attend the Senate hearing, but do not testify. Senate questions focused on NIH research supported with the large funding increases provided by the Congress over the last several years and on how the NIH would use a similar increase in FY 2001. Committee members also expressed particular interest in three disease areas—diabetes, Parkinson's disease, and Alzheimer's disease—as well as in health disparity issues.

## New NHLBI Research Initiatives

From time to time, the NHLBI invites investigators to submit grant applications or contract proposals for specific research programs. We currently are soliciting applications for the following programs. Unless a due date is noted below, applications are accepted for February 1, June 1, and October 1 deadlines each year. For a full description of these and other research initiatives, visit <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/funding/inits/index.htm>.

### Treatment of HIV and Associated Complications in Hemophiliacs (RFA-AI-00-011)

- Applications Due: 6/27/00
- Objective: To support clinical research applications to test and improve pathogenesis or therapeutic concepts. The need for this solicitation is based upon the outcomes of a workshop on clinical issues unique to the HIV-infected hemophiliac population.

### Pharmacogenetics Research Network and Knowledge Base (RFA-GM-00-003)

- Applications Due: 8/9/00
- Objective: To expand the scope of the Pharmacogenetics Research Network by adding more groups interested in studying how genetic variation contributes to inter-individual differences in drug responses. This initiative will further the goal of the Pharmacogenetics Knowledge Base by facilitating the linkage of genes and their sequence variants to their encoded proteins, their functional effects, and consequent drug response phenotypes (and sometimes disease phenotypes).

### Biobehavioral Research for Effective Sleep (PA-00-046)

- Objective: To support applied research areas related to the sleep-related problems found in healthy and chronically ill individuals who have acute and chronic partial sleep deprivation.

### Cellular and Molecular Mechanisms of Primary Pulmonary Hypertension (PA-00-043)

- Objective: To promote research in primary pulmonary hypertension with an emphasis on elucidating a mechanistic understanding of the disease.

### Specialized Centers of Research - Pathobiology of Fibrotic Lung Disease, Pathobiology of Lung Development, Cellular and Molecular Mechanisms of Asthma (RFA-HL-00-001)

- Applications Due: 8/30/00
- Objective: To foster multidisciplinary basic and clinical research enabling basic science findings to be more rapidly applied to clinical problems. It is expected that results from these grants will have applications for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of fibrotic lung disease, pulmonary diseases in infants and children, and asthma.

## Recent Advances from the NHLBI

### Making Sure the Blood You Get Is

**Safe:** The prospect of acquiring diseases such as AIDS and hepatitis can strike fear into anyone needing a transfusion. However, a recent technological leap in blood testing has virtually eliminated the risk of getting these diseases from blood or blood products. Nucleic acid testing (NAT) detects genes, not antibodies, for the hepatitis and AIDS viruses. The old method relied on finding antibodies, which do not form until the virus has been in the blood for some time. With the old test, infected blood could still test as suitable for donation. NAT solves this by detecting levels of virus too small to cause antibody formation, thereby making the world's safest blood supply ever even safer.

### NHLBI Issues New Advisory on

**Systolic Blood Pressure:** The NHLBI's National High Blood Pressure Education Program is campaigning to increase awareness of the dangers of high systolic blood pressure. An advisory appears in this month's issue of *Hypertension: Journal of the American Heart Association*. "Systolic hypertension is a major health threat, especially for older Americans," said NHLBI Director Dr. Claude Lenfant. "While it cannot be cured, systolic hypertension can be treated and its complications prevented. Americans may have heard that diastolic blood pressure counts more. That may be true for younger people. But we now know that, as people get older, systolic blood pressure becomes more important. If you're middle aged or older, it's a better blood pressure indicator than diastolic of your risk of heart disease and stroke."

### Newer High Blood Pressure Drug Performs No Better Than Standard Drug Treatment:

Earlier this year, the NHLBI discontinued part of a study because one drug, an alpha-adrenergic blocker, was less effective than an established diuretic drug in reducing some forms of disease. As a result, the NHLBI advises patients on alpha-adrenergic blocker drugs to consult their doctors about alternatives. "Patients on an alpha blocker should see their doctor and not just stop taking it," emphasized Dr. Jeffrey Cutler, the NHLBI's Clinical Applications and Prevention Program Director. "We cannot conclude that the drug was harmful. Rather it didn't work as well as the diuretic in reducing cardiovascular disease."

## The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Advisory Council's February Meeting

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Advisory Council met on February 10, 2000, in Bethesda, MD. Sixteen Council members, two ex-officio members, and the Chair, Dr. Claude Lenfant, were present. Full minutes of this and previous Council meetings can be viewed at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/meetings/nhlbac/index.htm>.

The Council reviewed the NHLBI budget for FY 2001 that President Clinton recently submitted to Congress. Although the proposal includes a 5.4% increase, or \$100.4 million, this increase is far less than the 15% increases received in FY 1999 and 2000. However, the budget legislation is not completed and the figures presented are tentative.

The Council spent considerable time discussing the NHLBI's first Public Interest Organizations' Session, held February 9, 2000. The organizations' representatives were interested in, among other things, "how to make things happen," models of action, and improved communication with NHLBI. They are committed citizens active in volunteerism with a wide range of sophistication and knowledge of their particular disease who were "tremendously helpful." The message conveyed was "if the quality of science is good, it will get funded." A report of the meeting and recommendations of the group can be found at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/meetings/liaison.htm>.

Dr. Lenfant gave an update of the NHLBI strategic plan which is a rolling document providing a 5 year plan for the Institute. Details of the Strategic Plan can be found at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/funding/fromdir/plan.htm>.

The following proposed initiatives (Requests for Applications) that the NHLBI is considering supporting were presented to the Council for its review: Genetic Aspects of TB in the Lung; The Framingham Study-renewal; Ancillary Studies in Heart, Lung, and Blood Disease Trials; and Chelation Therapy of Angina Pectoris. All but the last received the Council's enthusiastic support. The Council concurred on the award of 246 grants (both from previous NHLBI announcements and investigator initiated proposals) for a total cost of \$97,818,826.

Dr. Ruth Kirschstein, Acting Director of NIH's 25 institutes and centers, addressed the Council at this meeting. She said that President Clinton's proposed budget for the entire NIH is for \$18.8 billion.

As a separate topic, Dr. Kirschstein expressed concern about the widening health disparities between majority and minority groups. She noted, however, that each Institute is developing and implementing a strategic plan on health disparities to address this problem by providing the best, most creative scientific research possible.

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for 8:30 AM on May 18, 2000. This meeting is open to the public and will be held at NIH in Building 31C, Conference Room 10.

The *FYI from the NHLBI* staff thanks Mrs. Judith Simpson, member of the NHLBAC and Vice President, Pulmonary Hypertension Association, for her efforts in preparing this article.

## The Search Tools You *NEED* to Find the Information You *WANT*

*"I've heard people speak of MEDLINE and CRISP. But what are they and which one should I use?"*

**MEDLINE** (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/>) contains millions of abstracts of articles published in peer-reviewed biomedical journals. Because of this, information taken from MEDLINE can be considered as state-of-the-art in scientific knowledge. Use the **PubMed** search tool to sift through MEDLINE by entering key words related to your topic of interest, as well as other parameters such as author's name and the journal's title. Help with PubMed can be found at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov:80/entrez/query>.

**CRISP** (<http://www-commons.cit.nih.gov/crisp/>) is a searchable database of **federally funded** biomedical research projects. CRISP displays abstracts submitted by investigators as part of their applications for research funding. Because this information is part of the research proposal, hypotheses and data should be considered preliminary only. Like MEDLINE, CRISP may be searched by specific projects and/or investigators. Help with CRISP can be accessed via the "?" icon on the above Web page.

**The Clinical Trials Database** (<http://clinicaltrials.gov/ct/gui>) is your path to information about clinical studies. It includes noteworthy details about the clinical trials, such as the purpose of the studies, summaries of treatment protocols, patient eligibility requirements, and contact information. The "Users' Guide" contains a help file and is accessible at the above Web site.

**The Rare Diseases Clinical Research Database** (<http://rarediseases.info.nih.gov/ord/wwwprot/index.shtml>), developed for the Office of Rare Diseases at NIH, is designed to help you find information on clinical trials geared towards diseases that have a prevalence of no more than 200,000 in the United States. This database contains two types of help files: one is under the heading "For New Visitors" and the other is accessible through an icon titled "Help and More."

## Spotlight on Our Web Site

**New Web Site Provides Access to Information on Sleep and Sleep Disorders:** The NHLBI's National Center on Sleep Disorders Research designed a new Web site to offer the public and health care professionals up-to-date, science-based information on sleep and sleep disorders. It also informs the scientific community about research funding opportunities. This new site is highlighted on the NHLBI Web page (<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>) and can be accessed through the National Center for Sleep Disorder Research link.

**New Web Site Released for High Blood Pressure Education Month:** The National High Blood Pressure Education Program also has a new Web site. Reached through the NHLBI home page at [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov), the site has separate gateways with offerings tailored for the public, health professionals, and community organizations.

**Need More Information?**

- For **health related questions and publications**, please contact the trained information specialists at the NHLBI Information Center ([NHLBIinfo@rover.nhlbi.nih.gov](mailto:NHLBIinfo@rover.nhlbi.nih.gov)) or write to the Information Center at P.O. Box 30105, Bethesda, MD 20824-0105.
- For communications pertaining to NHLBI **policies and priorities**, contact the NHLBI Office of Legislative and Public Liaison ([SL34V@nih.gov](mailto:SL34V@nih.gov)).
- For **additional information regarding NHLBI's Calendar of Events**, consult the references provided or <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/calendar/nhcal.htm>. The *FYI from the NHLBI* staff do not have additional information on these activities. Most NIH Institutes also maintain calendars, accessible through their Web sites. Links to these Web pages are at <http://www.nih.gov/icd>.

Upcoming Events			
Date	Activity	Description	For Additional Information
5/3/00	World Asthma Day 2000	The theme of World Asthma Day is <b>Let Every Person Breathe</b> , emphasizing the need for asthma sufferers to have access to the resources necessary to help control their condition. The NHLBI's National Asthma Education and Prevention Program is coordinating activities in the United States.	<a href="http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/lung/asthma/wad_2/index.htm">http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/prof/lung/asthma/wad_2/index.htm</a>
5/5/00 - 5/10/00	American Lung Association and American Thoracic Society Conference	Toronto, Ontario. Program covers the latest information in clinical, basic, and behavioral sciences regarding respiratory disease and public health education.	<a href="http://www.thoracic.org/">http://www.thoracic.org/</a>
5/17/00-5/20/00	American Society of Hypertension 15th Scientific Meeting	New York, NY. Physicians, scientists, and other health care professionals and paraprofessionals with an interest in the mechanisms or management of hypertension will profit from attending this meeting.	<a href="http://www.ash-us.org/meetings.html">http://www.ash-us.org/meetings.html</a>
5/18/00	National Heart, Lung, and Blood Advisory Council	8:30am - 2:00pm NIH Main Campus Building 31C, Conference Room 10, Bethesda, MD. Open to the Public.	<a href="http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/meetings/nhlbac/index.htm">http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/meetings/nhlbac/index.htm</a>
6/5/00	Sickle Cell Disease Advisory Committee	9:00am - 4:00pm NIH Rockledge Building II, Conference Room 9100, Bethesda, MD. Open to the Public.	<a href="http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/meetings/scd/index.htm">http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/meetings/scd/index.htm</a>
6/29/00 - 6/30/00	Workshop: Post-Resuscitative and Initial Utility in Life Saving Efforts (PULSE)	8:00am - 7:00pm Lansdowne Conference Center, Leesburg, VA. The workshop will bring together expert scientists to develop novel research recommendations in the area of cardiopulmonary resuscitation.	<a href="http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/meetings/pulse/index.htm">http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/meetings/pulse/index.htm</a>
7/8/00-7/12/00	15th International Interdisciplinary Conference on Hypertension in Blacks	San Juan, Puerto Rico. The conference is focused on improving outcomes through comprehensive care of patients with hypertension.	<a href="http://www.ishib.org/i2k_opening.htm">http://www.ishib.org/i2k_opening.htm</a>
7/8/00-7/11/00	29th Annual Scientific Meeting-International Society of Experimental Hematology	Tampa, FL. ISEH 2000 is designed to present the latest basic and translational research findings related to experimental hematology.	<a href="http://www.iseh.org/iseh/events/1998.html">http://www.iseh.org/iseh/events/1998.html</a>

Since **May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month**, this issue includes three articles on hypertension. Even if you don't suffer from hypertension, odds are you know someone who does. Please, help us spread the word about this and the other diseases mentioned in this issue by circulating *FYI from the NHLBI* to people who might be interested. This and future issues can be accessed from the NHLBI Web site (<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>).

## **Constituents' Corner**

We are reserving space for you, our readers, to share ideas and broadcast opinions. We invite you to submit your comments, thoughts, and suggestions via email (NHLBI.Listens@nih.gov) or snail mail (Public Interest News, c/o Office of Science and Technology , Building 31, Room 5A03, 31 Center Drive, MSC-2482 Bethesda, MD 20892-2482). We also are considering the addition of a separate "Bulletin Board" where organizations can announce upcoming activities. For now, those announcements also can be sent to the above addresses.