

SUMMARY
NIH INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES MEETING
May 11, 2004

Welcome and Introduction of Speakers: Dr. Sharon Hrynkow, Chair, and Acting Director, FIC, welcomed the IC representatives to the Stone House. She introduced the co-chairs of the Trans-NIH Sub-committee on International Nutrition Research (SCINR) – Dr. Daniel Raiten, NICHD/PRIP/ENG, and Dr. Rachel Nugent, FIC/DITR – and invited them to provide an overview on the SCINR and an update on its activities.

Update from the SCINR: Drs. Raiten and Nugent provided an update of the SCINR's activities since it began in early 2002. The SCINR was created in order to provide a venue for trans-NIH discussion and information sharing about international nutrition activities and issues. It is constituted as a sub-committee of the NIH Nutrition Coordinating Committee and has membership from 20 ICs, CSR and two offices (OBBSR and ODS.)

Dr. Raiten amplified the SCINR's objectives as: increased visibility to and recognition of the relevance of nutrition to all aspects of NIH international activities; encouraging NIH research activity in critical topic areas; coordinating NIH efforts to increase in-country capacity for research; and improving the dissemination of research findings, information exchange and translation of research into application. Topic areas of particular priority were defined at the outset. They include: the relationship of nutrition to infectious diseases, increasing prevalence of nutrition-related non-communicable diseases, impacts of increasing environmental exposures, and cognitive and behavioral issues related to nutritional status.

Dr. Nugent described the SCINR's activities to date. Eight meetings have been held at NIH. At the meetings guest speakers have presented on a variety of international nutrition topics, SCINR members have shared announcements and activities within their own ICs and the group has discussed timely international nutrition issues, such as the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. The SCINR has been instrumental in raising the profile of international nutrition issues at NIH. The SCINR membership is currently considering the possibility of organizing a conference/workshop on a topic pertaining to the health implications of obesity and its concomitants from an international perspective. If the concept is approved, a working group will be formed to develop a proposal for support and implementation. .

Following the overviews, IC reps offered a number of suggestions for future SCINR activities. Topics of interest included the role of nutrition in prevention and care of cardiovascular disease in resource-limited settings, health promotion and prevention programs (with specific reference to current activities in the Americas), women's health, Arctic research, and migration.

HHS Policy Regarding International Interactions: Dr. Hrynkow highlighted three issues stemming from new policy guidance from the HHS Office of Global Health Affairs (OGHA) developed with respect to HHS international interactions.

Notifications of Foreign Travel (NFTs): OGHA has instituted policy guidance regarding the reporting of travel to U.S.-based international (i.e., UN) organizations, including PAHO, UNICEF and UNDP. Effective immediately, all travel of NIH personnel to these organizations is to be reported through the on-line NFT system. Through her contact with OGHA Director, Dr. William Steiger, to seek clarification on this policy, Dr. Hrynkow noted that such notification will be for informational and not clearance purposes. She also noted that if an NIH program officer were going to visit with PAHO counterparts on day-to-day business items, they would not need to file an NFT. However, such NFT clearance would be needed for meetings hosted and organized by the organizations wherever they may be held. She also noted that further clarification was needed on NIH interactions with the New York-based organizations. She will seek such clarification from Dr. Steiger upon his return from foreign travel later this month.

Foreign Travel and Foreign Visits: Dr. Hrynkow noted that efforts are underway to get a new set of HHS-wide policies and procedures in place for HHS personnel traveling abroad as well as security relating to hosting of foreign visitors at HHS facilities. NIH/OD and FIC are together working to develop implementation procedures to comply with the new policies. FIC will continue to have a coordinating role with respect to most foreign delegations. However, some ICs also host foreign visits and, as such, a process will need to be devised to manage such visits. The new policy also establishes reporting and potential security briefing requirements for NIH personnel traveling to foreign countries, including travel to events where nationals of certain designated countries can reasonably be expected to be in attendance. Dr. Hrynkow noted that NIH is also seeking further clarification regarding issues raised under this guidance. The IC representatives were encouraged to work with their respective front offices to review the NIH-implementation proposals needed to comply with these new policies.

Participation in Multilateral Organization Meetings/Events: OGHA will now serve as the coordinator of HHS expert participation in meetings and events hosted by multilateral organizations. This policy is being put in place to get a better sense of who is representing HHS at events. OGHA has asked WHO (and will subsequently ask other key UN organizations) to route all invitations for HHS agency experts for such meetings/events to OGHA which, in turn, will work with HHS focal points to identify the appropriate staff who may be available to participate. Dr. Zerhouni has asked Dr. Hrynkow to serve as the NIH focal point in the implementation of the new policy. She expects that each IC, in turn, will need to identify a focal point – presumably the IC international representative – to serve as a point of contact in identifying appropriate NIH experts for such meetings and events. Dr. Hrynkow noted that NIH is still working on other implementation issues. For example, certain pre-existing relationships – such as under the WHO collaborating center system – may be exempt from the new policy, but this still needs clarification. Moreover, the matter of NIH staff being invited to serve in their “personal capacity” at multilateral organization meetings was also discussed. Dr. Hrynkow noted that HHS staff, according to the guidance, couldn’t serve in their

personal capacity if the activity relates to official duties. Further clarification may be needed from OGHA as to these requirements. Dr. Hrynkow has been asked to make a presentation to IC Directors on the new policy and implementation.

Announcements:

The NIH Roadmap through the International Lens: So as to have international implementation aspects of the NIH Roadmap better examined through the international “lens”, Dr. Hrynkow – following consultations with NIH Roadmap coordinator Dr. Dushanka Kleinman – announced that FIC Acting Deputy Director Mr. Richard Millstein, together with Dr. John Haller, the NIBIB international representative, would co-chair an ad hoc sub-group of the IC representatives. This grew out of Dr. Kleinman’s presentation on the Road map at the March meeting of the IC international representatives. The sub-group would focus on three issues: communication, so as to ensure that foreign groups are aware of Roadmap opportunities; Roadmap RFAs preparation, so that international or global health views may be considered; and barriers and obstacles to implementing the Roadmap abroad. Further information on the convening of this sub-group will be sent to the IC representatives in the near future.

FIC Advisory Board: The FIC Advisory Board meets on May 18. NIDDK Director, Dr. Allen Spiegel, will make a presentation to the Board on the “Global Burden of Obesity”. The Board will then hear about current NIH international research efforts on obesity as well as possibilities for future research directions.

FIC Country Pages: The FIC Division of International Relations will be in contact with the IC representatives in the near future with respect to a meeting that will be organized on the FIC “country pages”. These country pages are developed and maintained by DIR as a snapshot of NIH efforts in every country. They are used by a variety of groups, including senior NIH officials, as part of background prior to meetings. The meeting will seek IC representative input and other users, including OGHA, on efforts to streamline the country pages so as to ensure that they are as user friendly as possible.

HHS Readiness Corps: Dr. Hrynkow noted that OGHA’s Dr. William Steiger has requested that HHS agencies identify a “readiness corps” of personnel who may be able to travel in emergency situations or accompany the Secretary on his international travels. Individuals who may be identified need to have an official passport. Moreover, it would be useful for these individuals to have security clearances as well as language capabilities (e.g., Arabic, Russian, Chinese). Dr. Hrynkow noted that NIH would probably identify 15 or fewer individuals. CDC has already identified approximately 15 CDC staff, including CDC Director Dr. Gerberding.

FIC’s NIH Grants Information CD and Bioethics Case Studies CD: FIC provided copies of a revised and expanded NIH Grants Information CD at the meeting. In addition, copies of the case studies and background information related to the recent 5th Global Forum for Bioethics meetings that was held in Paris in April were also provided to IC representatives at the meeting.

The next meeting of the NIH IC International Representatives will be Tuesday, July 13, 2004, at 1 pm in the Stone House.

Attendance:

Dr. Sharon Hrynkow, FIC Acting Director; Mr. George Herrfurth, Executive Secretary, FIC; Dr. Daniel Raiten and Ms. Isabel Otero, NICHD; Dr. Martha Hare, NINR; Drs. Lois Cohen and Kevin Hardwick, NIDCR; Ms. Julia Royall, NLM; Dr. Karl Western and Ms. Katie Herz, NIAID; Mr. John Whitaker, NEI; Drs. Karen Babich and Donna Mayo, NIMH; Dr. Yuan Liu, NINDS; Dr. Pat Needle, NIDA; Dr. Ruth Hegyeli and Ms. Helen Wegman, NHLBI; Dr. Zakir Bengali, CSR; Dr. Sharon Pope, NIDDK; Dr. Patricia Sokolove, NIBIB; Dr. Philip Chen, OD/OIR; Ms Peggy Murray, NIAAA; Mr. Thomas Mampilly, HHS/OGHA. FIC staff: Ms. Nalini Anand, Mr. Bruce Butram, Dr. Pierce Gardner, Dr. Karen Hofman, Ms. Judy Levin, Dr. Jean Flagg Newton, Mr. Mark Pineda, Dr. Mark Miller, Mr. Richard Millstein, Dr. Chris Schonwalder