

SUMMARY
NIH INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES MEETING
March 9, 2004

Welcome and Comments: Dr. Sharon Hrynkow, Chair, and Acting Director, FIC, welcomed the IC representatives to the Stone House. She noted that Dr. Martha Hare (absent) has been designated as the new representative from NINR to the IC International Representatives meetings and commented that FIC is looking forward to working with Dr. Hare in her new capacity.

Dr. Hrynkow noted that she and Dr. Jack Whitescarver, Director, OAR, had participated in a conference call, along with Dr. Western, NIAID, and representatives of each HHS operating division with Dr. Bill Steiger to discuss the upcoming AIDS Conference in Thailand. The purpose of the call was to consider DHHS and other U.S. representation at the Conference. HHS/OS, in consultation with Ambassador Randall Tobias, has determined that there will be a limit on the overall number of DHHS personnel allowed to attend this event. Dr. Whitescarver will be contacting the ICs directly to undertake the coordination and to identify NIH participants for the meeting.

Dr. Hrynkow also noted that OGHA is reformatting its monthly HHS International Representatives (IREps) meeting using a “core group” of HHS global health representatives. She has been asked by Dr. Zerhouni to serve as the NIH participant in the Global Health Policy Group. In this regard, she noted that she would consult with the IC representatives on agenda items raised in this meeting process. The first meeting is set for March 15.

Dr. Hrynkow reminded the Group that FIC will host a meeting on March 16 to discuss ICs’ needs for guidance and/or assistance in developing agreements with foreign collaborators to advance NIH research priorities. Among the expected outcomes will be a primer or “how to” on when to engage in formal agreements and how to go about crafting them with appropriate parties. FIC intends to post this to its website. FIC lead is Ms. Minerva Rojo, Director, Division of International Relations.

NIH Roundtable on Grants Management and Monitoring in Developing Countries: Dr. Karen Hofman, Director, FIC Division of Advanced Studies and Policy Analysis, and Dr. Danuta Krotoski, NICHD Acting Associate Director for Prevention Research and International Programs, jointly presented on the results of the December 16, 2003, NIH Roundtable Discussion on the Management and Monitoring of Grants in the Developing World that was hosted by FIC and NICHD and attended by representatives from 15 ICs. Drs. Hofman and Krotoski outlined the impetus for the roundtable by noting that there has been growing interest about grants management and monitoring in developing countries particularly in light of the increased numbers of such grants in recent years and questions from PIs. Another impetus for the roundtable related to the need to assess ways to effectively leverage federal research funds in a time of diminishing budgets and to identify ways to better support research institutions in developing countries.

A questionnaire provided to ICs before the meeting helped to shape the discussions at the roundtable. Among the challenges identified at the roundtable and through the use of the questionnaire included the fact that there are no “best practices” to assist in the administration and management of international grants in developing countries; that barriers exist to effective management of research in such countries, including those related to political instability/conflict; lack of knowledge/infrastructure for grant administration; inadequate technical staffing to complete research; and inadequate financial accounting systems. A set of recommendations was discussed at the roundtable to address these and other challenges. Included among these recommendations was the need to (1) establish an NIH-wide data tracking system for international grants; (2) foster greater internal coordination among ICs; (3) increase clarity regarding requirements for pre-award and post-award procedures; and (4) encourage oversight and infrastructure development at foreign sites using common on-site contractors or NIH regional activities. The roundtable participants also recommended a series of follow-up meetings needing endorsement by the Extramural Programs Management Committee (EPMC) related to the development of “best practices” for international grant management and oversight in developing countries. A full report of the roundtable is expected in the near future and will be shared with the IC representatives.

WHO Report on “Knowledge for Better Health” and Mexico City Summit: Mr. Rob Eiss, FIC Senior Advisor for Strategic Initiatives, provided an update on the report and other documents being prepared for the November 16-20 WHO-hosted Summit on Health Research in Mexico City. The Summit will coincide with the 8th Meeting of the Global Forum for Health Research. The Summit’s intent will be to adopt a technical agenda for health research related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that were adopted at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000. Moreover, the Summit will advance several arguments pertaining to health research, including that: it is an investment and not a cost; it should be broadly defined to also embrace social and management sciences; all countries should possess a health research system that drives health sector reform; it should improve equity both within and among populations; it should be conducted according to universal ethical standards; its results should be accessible to all; and civil society has a vital role in setting health research priorities.

Mr. Eiss noted that WHO’s substantive contributions to the Summit will be a monograph entitled “The World Report on Knowledge for Better Health” as well as several proposals that address health systems research priorities; the feasibility of an international registration system for controlled trials; and, a proposal on improving global access to research outcomes and information. He noted that WHO has asked its regional offices to hold regional consultations in the near future to inform and provide recommendations for the preparation of the Report and that an MRC- and Wellcome Trust-hosted “Funders Forum” meeting will be held in London on April 28 to address issues raised in the preparation of the Report. He also noted that WHO is preparing a website related to the Report to invite public comment on it. Mr. Eiss noted that a preliminary draft of the Report has raised coherency concerns and that these would need to be addressed in the ongoing Report preparation process. He underscored that NIH has a significant

opportunity to help shape the report for the Summit. He also indicated that he would send an annotated outline of the Report to the IC representatives for their comment and suggestions as well as potentially seek other IC input related to the Report.

NIH Roadmap Initiatives and International Research: Dr. Dushanka Kleinman, NIH Assistant Director for Roadmap Coordination, presented to the Group on the “NIH Roadmap” and where international activities and research fit into it. She provided an overview of the Roadmap as related to its three theme areas: (1) Re-engineering the Clinical Research Enterprise; (2) Research Teams of the Future; and (3) New Pathways to Discovery. She also highlighted funding related to Roadmap activities to be expended for FY04 (\$128 million) and cumulatively through FY09 (over \$2.1 billion). Dr. Kleinman also noted several interactions that senior NIH officials have had with international representatives since January related to inquiries about the Roadmap. In the discussions that ensued, she noted that the Roadmap was not developed with specific groups in mind, but that opportunities exist for international collaborations. There was discussion on the 17 grant announcements and funding opportunities related to the Roadmap. Dr. Hrynkow noted that FIC conducted a cursory review of these funding opportunities, including the RFAs associated with the Roadmap, and discovered that while some do afford opportunities for international applications, others do not, and still others are silent on the possibility of international applications. Dr. Kleinman indicated that since the Roadmap RFAs are dynamic, an opportunity exists to explore ways of including international collaborative efforts in its activities. She highlighted the notion that a working group of interested NIH representatives could look at the Roadmap through an international and global health lens.

Announcements: Mr. Bruce Butram, FIC Chief Grants Management Officer, noted that a revised and expanded NIH Grants Information CD was being prepared and would be made available to the Group at a future date.

The next meeting of the NIH IC International Representatives and Partners will be Tuesday, May 11, 2004, at 1 pm in the Stone House.

Attendance:

Dr. Sharon Hrynkow, FIC Acting Director; Mr. George Herrfurth, Executive Secretary, FIC; Dr. Danuta Krotoski and Ms. Isabel Otero, NICHD; Dr. Lois Cohen, NIDCR; Dr. Elliot Siegel and Ms. Julia Royall, NLM; Dr. Karl Western, Dr. Paula Strickland and Ms. Heather Burns, NIAID; Dr. Dushanka Kleinman, NIH/OD; Mr. John Whitaker, NEI; Dr. John Haller, NIBIB; Dr. Karen Babich and Dr. Donna Mayo, NIMH; Dr. Yuan Liu and Ms. Rebecca Farkas, NINDS; Dr. Luis Salicrup, OD/OTT, Ms. Dale Weiss, NIDA; Dr. Marta Campbell, NIA; Ms. Helen Wegman, NHLBI; Dr. Zakir Bengali, CSR; Dr. Jose Serrano, NIDDK; Dr. Chris Schonwalder, FIC/NIEHS; Dr. James McKearney, NCI; Ms. Karen Kun, NCCAM; Ms. Gail Wolfson, OD/OAR; Dr. Laura Cole, NIDCD; Ms. Anne Hill, OGHA. FIC staff: Ms. Nalini Anand, Mr. Kevin Bialy, Mr. Bruce Butram, Ms. Emmy Cauthen, Ms. Liza Dawson, Mr. Rob Eiss, Dr. Karen Hofman, Mr. Maria Kaspar, Ms. Judy Levin, Ms. Sonja Madera, Mr. Mark Pineda, Mr. Dick Millstein, Ms. Minerva Rojo, Ms. Natalie Tomitch