The Affordable Care Act – A Translational Research Project?

The Affordable Care Act promises to bring the largest change to the American health care system that has been seen in several decades. Will the change be good or bad? While many choose to argue this point, Dr. Harry P Selker, ACTS Vice President for Healthcare Implementation, Delivery and Policy Research, and colleagues make a compelling argument that changes in health care delivery should be viewed as a translational research experiment that requires rigorous scientific evaluation. A link to their article in Science and Translational Medicine can be found here.

News from ACTS

Translational Science 2014 Meeting - Registration and Abstract Submission Now Open
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Translational Science News

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BRF: Fay/Frank Seed Grant Program
American Diabetes Association Mentor-Based Postdoctoral Minority Fellowship Award

About ACTS

The ACTS mission is to advance research and education in clinical and translational science to improve human health. For more information, visit actscience.org
Dr. Christopher Austin, Director of the National Center for Advancing Clinical and Translational Science (NCATS)

Dr. Bruce Gellin of the National Vaccine Program Office, US Department of Health and Human Services

Dr. John McKew of the National Center for Advancing Clinical and Translational Science (NCATS) and Dr. Barry Coller of Rockefeller University

Dr. William Chin, Executive Vice President, Science and Regulatory Affairs, PhRMA

The program will include Mock Study Sections and Concurrent Sessions on "Scientific Misconduct: Pitfalls for the Junior Investigator," "How to Write a K Grant," "K to R - Mentoring to Success," "Pediatrics/Child Health," Academic Advancement for Translational Researchers," "Serendipity in Science". New this year, a limited number of abstracts will be selected for oral presentations, in addition to poster sessions.

Early registration will be available until February 28, 2014. Register now and save!

Submit your abstract by January 29, 2014. We look forward to seeing you at Translational Science 2014.

Washington Update

When Congress acted to end the recent government shutdown and raise the country's debt-ceiling, the legislation that was passed called for a House and Senate Conference Committee on the federal budget. For months, the House and Senate have been moving down divergent paths with regards to funding for government programs. The House has advanced spending proposals that seek to cut federal funding below sequestration levels. Alternatively, the Senate is seeking the end to sequestration and provide a restoration of funding for many programs. The Conference Committee's only mandate is to try to reconcile the House and Senate budgets so that there is a consensus framework for federal spending moving forward.

While the deadline for the Committee to put forth a draft agreement is fast approaching, lawmakers remain optimistic that a deal can be reached. Although negotiations are taking place behind closed-doors, it is reported that in addition to agreeing on a top-line number for federal spending the Committee is trying to close some tax loop holes and advance certain entitlement reforms to programs like Social Security.

Most importantly, the House and Senate are presently holding fiscal year (FY) 2014 appropriations bills pending the outcome of the Conference Committee's effort. If the Committee puts forth a budget proposal that is supported by both chambers, appropriators will need to modify their bills to align with the new spending guidelines. Presently, all federal programs are operating under a stop-gap spending measure known as a Continuing Resolution (CR), which is set to expire in mid-January. Congress will need to take some action on FY 2014 appropriations before the CR expires.

The great hope of the current Conference Committee effort is that lawmakers will ultimately support a proposal that eliminates sequestration. Due to the tireless outreach of medical research advocates and other advocates, there is a growing consensus on Capitol Hill that sequestration needs to be fixed. The work of medical research advocates received some additional support recently when the defense industry called on Congress to end sequestration due to the devastating impact indiscriminate funding cuts are having on our ability to advance defense research. Hopefully, the expanding chorus of voices calling to end sequestration will be heard by a critical mass of Congress ahead of the completion of FY 2014 appropriations.

Share Your Passion, Share Your Experience: Become Involved in ACTS!

Involvement in ACTS is an ideal way to advance your profession while continuing to expand the clinical and translational science field. ACTS volunteers are provided with the unique opportunity to influence the direction and future of our organization.

The ACTS Board of Directors is currently seeking qualified candidates to fill three Director-at-Large positions. All members in good standing are eligible to nominate themselves or others for this position. If you would like to serve as a Director-at-Large or recommend someone else for the position, please visit ACTS's Nomination webpage to fill out a nomination form by January 6, 2014.

ACTS is also seeking volunteers to serve on our many committees. Visit our volunteer webpage for more information on the committees and to indicate your interest in a committee position.

The ACTS Connection Editors Want Your Feedback

ACTS Connection Editor, Dr. Satish R. Raj, MD, MSCI, and Associate Editor, Dr. Quinn Wells, MD, PharmD, MSCI, are interested in hearing about ways that ACTS Connection could provide even more value to our readers.

Please feel free to email Dr. Raj or Dr. Wells with your comments or suggestions.

Translational Science News

Pamela M. McInnes Named National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences Deputy Director

The National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) has named Pamela M. McInnes as its new deputy director. McInnes, who will join NCATS in January 2014, currently serves as director of the Division of Extramural Research at the National
PCORI Approves Over $1B for Comparative Effectiveness Research in 2014-15

During a recent meeting in Atlanta, the board of governors of the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) approved a two-year commitment to provide more than $1 billion in funding for comparative effectiveness research. This marks a major jump in funding from PCORI, which was created by the Affordable Care Act to promote research aimed at bringing down the cost of healthcare. PCORI estimates it will provide $400 million in grant funding by the end of 2013, and the November vote approved a projected $528 million in awards for 2014 and an operating budget of $182 million. Funds will be directed toward research in several areas, including health disparities, shared decision-making, chronic disease management, and research methods. The board also approved a 139-page methodology report, which provides guidelines for effective research. “Departures from basic good research practices are partially responsible for mismatches between the quality and relevance of the information research provides and the information patients need to make informed decisions.”

From "PCORI Approves Over $1B for Comparative Effectiveness Research in 2014-15"

Cleveland Organizations Launch Institution for Medical Data Analysis

Three organizations—Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland Clinic, and University Hospitals—have formed the Institute of Computational Biology to better analyze vast amounts of medical data. The new institute will deploy technological infrastructure to allow researchers from the three institutions to assess existing clinical data for ways to improve treatment of patients and communities, officials say. “We can collect myriad genetics/genomics data from every one of our patients, but if we don’t have the capability to convert that data into actionable information, we have gained nothing,” said Paul DiCorleto, chair of Cleveland Clinic’s Lerner Research Institute. “The Institute of Computational Biology will provide this capability with cutting-edge bioinformatics and analytical tools.”

From "Cleveland Organizations Launch Institution for Medical Data Analysis"

Genetic & PhRMA Partner to Drive Patient-Focused Drug Development

The Genetic Alliance and the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America have launched an initiative to examine the use of a technology-based, crowdsourcing strategy to facilitate patient-focused drug development. The Genetic Alliance issued a request for proposals, after which it selected advocacy organizations representing three disease areas for public meetings in 2014 and 2015. The three disease areas are sickle cell disease; idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis; and irritable bowel syndrome, gastroesophageal reflux. “Using the Platform for Engaging Everyone Responsibly (PEER), there is an opportunity to demonstrate the power of a secure, crowdsourced approach to provide additional insight into patients’ experience with a disease or condition,” says Sharon Terry, president and CEO of Genetic Alliance.

From "Genetic & PhRMA Partner to Drive Patient-Focused Drug Development"

Singapore Joins Global Translational Medicine Network as Asia-Pacific Hub

The Eureka Institute for Translational Medicine has signed a memorandum of understanding with SingHealth and Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School, which form Singapore’s largest academic healthcare cluster. Eureka is a new global research network designed to facilitate the discovery of treatments and cures, and it includes academic medical institutes from Europe and North America. Researchers from the two institutions will gain access to knowledge, resources, and technologies from across the network to strengthen their ability to conduct globally impactful research. Additionally, researchers from the network will be offered places on the Eureka Institute’s translational medicine certification program. Serving as network members, Singhealth and Duke-NUS will be able to help develop the course to make sure it addresses skill gaps relevant to Asia. "Translational Medicine is like a bridge which joins patients to researchers. It is a two-way bridge, as unmet medical needs inspire research, and research provides new solutions to fight disease. ... Eureka aims to address these problems innovatively and comprehensively," says Salvatore Albanis, president, Eureka Institute for Translational Medicine.

From "Singapore Joins Global Translational Medicine Network as Asia-Pacific Hub"

Pfizer to Expand Clinical Data Access to Researchers, Patients

Pfizer has announced it will be easier for independent researchers and patients to access information from its clinical trials. Starting in 2014, the company will make available easy-to-comprehend abstracts of its trial results to study participants who want to receive them. Trial participants also will be able to download all of their personal data extracted during the study. For medical and scientific researchers, Pfizer says it will consider requests for access to its trial information, providing anonymous patient data available for high-quality scientific reviews, and it will ensure transparency by creating an independent review panel of academic scientists with the authority to supersede a Pfizer veto or partial approval of clinical data access to researchers.

From "Pfizer to Expand Clinical Data Access to Researchers, Patients"

Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Approved a Two-Year Commitment to Provide Over $1B for Comparative Effectiveness Research

The Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) approved a two-year commitment to provide over $1 billion for comparative effectiveness research in 2014 and 2015. Funds will be directed toward research in several areas, including health disparities, shared decision-making, chronic disease management, and research methods. The board also approved a 139-page methodology report, which provides guidelines for effective research. "Departures from basic good research practices are partially responsible for mismatches between the quality and relevance of the information research provides and the information patients need to make informed decisions.”

From "Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Approved a Two-Year Commitment to Provide Over $1B for Comparative Effectiveness Research"
Grant Opportunities

Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Institutional
Research Training Grant (Parent T32)

The National Institutes of Health has announced the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Institutional Research Training Grants (T32), which are intended to boost predoctoral and postdoctoral research training and help ensure that a diverse and highly trained workforce is available to meet the nation’s biomedical, behavioral, and clinical research agenda. The research training programs will include didactic, research, and career development components to help prepare recipients for careers that will have a significant impact on the health-related research needs of the country. Applications are due by Jan. 25, 2014.

From "Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Institutional Research Training Grant (Parent T32)"
Grants.gov (12/09/13)
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Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award Short-Term Institutional Research Training Grant (Parent T35)

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is accepting applications for the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award Short-Term Institutional Research Training Grants (T35) to eligible, domestic institutions who are interested in expanding research training opportunities for predoctoral students who are interested in careers in biomedical, behavioral or clinical research. A number of NIH Institutes and Centers use this program to support intensive, short-term research training experiences for health professional students during the summer. This program also aims to encourage training of graduate students in the physical or quantitative sciences to pursue research careers by short-term exposure to, and involvement in, the health-related sciences. Applications are due by Jan. 25, 2014.

From "Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award Short-Term Institutional Research Training Grant (Parent T35)"
Grants.gov (12/09/13)
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Indo-US Collaborative Program on Affordable Medical Devices (R03)

The National Institutes of Health has issued a funding opportunity announcement for an Indo-U.S. collaborative program on affordable medical devices. The program aims to encourage joint activities between U.S. and Indian scientists on affordable diagnostic and therapeutic technologies and address medical needs in low-resource settings, taking advantage of opportunities and technological advances, to aid the development of appropriate affordable medical devices. The coordinated program will involve collaborative, peer-reviewed research and technology development projects. Grants provided under this program will cover direct costs of up to $75,000 per year for two years. Applications are due by Jan. 23, 2014.

From "Indo-US Collaborative Program on Affordable Medical Devices (R03)"
NIH Grants (11/21/13)
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Macy Faculty Scholars

The Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation has issued a call for applications for the 2014 Macy Faculty Scholars Program. The program seeks to identify and nurture the careers of promising educational innovators in medicine and nursing. Scholars chosen for the program will receive salary support of $100,000 per year for two years, at least 50 percent protected time for two years to pursue educational projects, active mentorship by a senior faculty member at their institution, access to the program’s national advisory committee, and opportunities to participate in Macy conferences and other national meetings. Applications are due by Feb. 26, 2014.

From "Macy Faculty Scholars"
Macy Foundation (11/14/13)
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Exceptional Unconventional Research Enabling Knowledge Acceleration (EUREKA) for Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System (R01)

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has issued a funding opportunity announcement (FOA) for innovative Research Project Grant (R01) applications addressing exceptionally novel hypotheses and/or remarkably difficult problems in neuroscience and disorders of the nervous system. The FOA—from the National Institute of Mental Health, National Institute on Aging, National Institute on Drug Abuse, and National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke—notes that the “proposed research may have a high risk of failure, but it must promise results with especially high impact should it be successful.” The EUREKA (Exceptional Unconventional Research Enabling Knowledge Acceleration) program seeks to promote innovative research that, if successful, will have an unusually high impact on the areas of science that are germane to the mission of one or more of the participating NIH Institutes. A letter of intent is due by Jan. 3, 2014.

From "Exceptional Unconventional Research Enabling Knowledge Acceleration (EUREKA) for Neuroscience and Disorders of the Nervous System (R01)"
NIH Grants (11/14/13)
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BRF: Fay/Frank Seed Grant Program

The Brain Research Foundation’s Fay/Frank Seed Grant Program is offering funding for new research projects in the field of neuroscience that will likely lead to extramural funding from the National Institutes of Health or other outside funding sources. The foundation, which launched the program in 1981, has invited 29 U.S. institutions to nominate faculty to submit letters of intent for 2014 program funding. The program aims to support new and innovative projects, particularly those of junior faculty, who are working in new research directions. Letters of intent are due by Jan. 8, 2014.

From "BRF: Fay/Frank Seed Grant Program"
Brain Research Foundation (11/14/13)
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American Diabetes Association Mentor-Based Postdoctoral Minority Fellowship
Award

The American Diabetes Association's Training Award program supports postdoctoral fellows and students working toward doctoral degrees. The program aims to support the training of minority scientists who are underrepresented in the field of diabetes research. Applicants must identify as an eligible minority defined under the terms of this award, including African American; Hispanic or Latino; American Indian or Alaskan Native; and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. Awards are $45,000 per year for two to three years. Applications are due by Jan. 15, 2014.

From "American Diabetes Association Mentor-Based Postdoctoral Minority Fellowship Award"
American Diabetes Association (11/07/13)

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