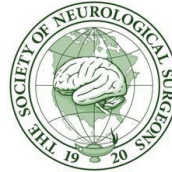




American
Association of
Neurological
Surgeons



Congress of
Neurological
Surgeons

March 15, 2021

Walter J. Koroshetz, MD, Director
Nina F. Schor, MD, PhD, Deputy Director
National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, MD 20892

SUBJECT: Feedback on Draft 2021-2026 NINDS Strategic Plan

Dear Drs. Koroshetz and Schor:

On behalf of the American Academy of Neurological Surgery (AAcNS), American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS), American Board of Neurological Surgery (ABNS), Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) and Society of Neurological Surgeons (SNS), representing organized neurosurgery in the United States, we write to thank you and the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) for the opportunity to provide input into the NINDS strategic plan.

Organized neurosurgery provided extensive recommendations in 2019, following the initial call for feedback (*see* attached letter dated Sept. 30, 2019). After careful review of the new Draft 2021-2026 NINDS Strategic Plan, we appreciate that the NINDS incorporated our previous recommendations into the draft strategic plan, including:

- Funding and support for training of future physician-scientists, mentorship and enhancing workforce diversity;
- Supporting programs that will provide fundamental understanding into nervous system function;
- Funding for programs that will define insights into the basic mechanisms of neurological disorders;
- Supporting developing biomarker and outcome measures that will improve therapies and patient outcomes;
- Funding for personalized therapeutic approaches to treating neurological disorders;
- Improving treatments for neurologic diseases through the support of preclinical development of small molecule drugs, biologics and devices;
- Supporting early/advanced clinical trials, comparative effectiveness research, data analytics, epidemiological studies and preventive measures;
- Advancing health equity through NINDS programs and support;
- Supporting independent and team science research paradigms;
- Providing access to technology and scientific resources across the scientific community;
- Identifying areas to augment the intramural program resources and to increase collaboration extramurally; and
- Promoting communication to propel scientific progress and neurologic treatments.

As the NINDS moves forward with an updated strategic plan, we want to reiterate and emphasize some of the most critical components of the strategic plan for our organizations, including:

- Expanding support for successful in-training and early career support, including the R25, K12, K08 and K23, that have multiplied independent neurosurgeon investigators and neuroscience research impact (see the attached article from the *Journal of Neurosurgery* titled, "Creation of a comprehensive training and career development approach to increase the number of neurosurgeons supported by National Institutes of Health funding");
- Targeting support for device and technologic development for surgical technologies;
- Funding for observational natural history and treatment studies will be transformative to optimizing understanding and management of neurologic disease;
- Creating a pool of expert clinical trialists who use randomized trials and prospective observational database methodologies will be crucial to turning basic and translational discoveries into effective clinical therapies;
- Growing opportunities for NIH, industry and academic partnerships to move device/technologies forward;
- Defining support for regulatory training and new investigational drug/device exemption-enabling studies to provide a pathway to the clinic for promising new technologies; and
- Growing and supporting opportunities for NINDS, industry and academic partnerships to move device/technologies forward.

Because the COVID-19 pandemic had not occurred at the onset of the strategic planning process and the NINDS's initial request for information, we did not have an opportunity to address this critical health care issue in our original letter. Specifically, we believe that funds directed to understanding the acute and long-term impact of this viral illness on the nervous system will be critical in several areas, including the:

- Mechanism of vascular thrombosis and stroke associated with COVID-19;
- Natural history (including long-term effects) of COVID-19 related neurologic findings; and
- Pathogenesis of COVID-19-associated neurologic signs and symptoms.

As the strategic planning process moves forward, we would recommend the following representatives across the various neurological surgery stakeholders:

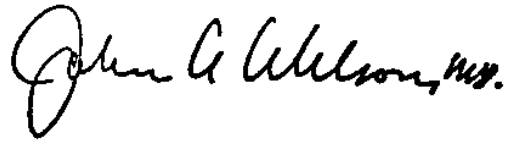
- One representative (neurosurgeon) that is a member of the NINDS Advisory Council;
- One representative for the Neurosurgery Research and Education Fund (NREF);
- One representative from the Executive Committee of the Neurosurgeon Research Career Development Program (NRCDP); and
- The president/chair (or designated representative) from each of the following national neurosurgical organizations: the American Academy of Neurological Surgery, American Association of Neurological Surgeons, American Board of Neurological Surgeons, Congress of Neurological Surgeons and Society of Neurological Surgeons.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into this important process. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

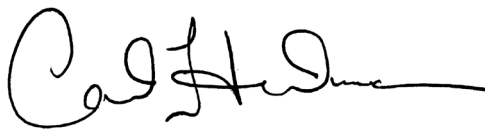
Sincerely,



Douglas S. Kondziolka, MD, President
American Academy of Neurological Surgery



John A. Wilson, M.D., President
American Association of Neurological Surgeons



Carl B. Heilman, MD, Chair
American Board of Neurological Surgeons



Brian L. Hoh, MD, President
Congress of Neurological Surgeons



M. Sean Grady, M.D., President
Society of Neurological Surgeons

Attachments:

- Sept. 30, 2019 letter to NINDS from national neurosurgical organizations providing input into the NINDS strategic plan
- *Journal of Neurosurgery* article "Creation of a comprehensive training and career development approach to increase the number of neurosurgeons supported by National Institutes of Health funding"

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