Grassroots Toolkit

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FAQs

What is the Rally for Medical Research and who is participating?
The Rally for Medical Research will be held on Monday, April 8 at 11:00 a.m. in Washington, DC, on the steps of the Carnegie Library (across the street from the Washington Convention Center). More than 80 national organizations and institutions have publicly expressed their support for this effort by becoming partnering organizations. The event will unite millions of Americans across the country to call on our nation’s policymakers to make life-saving medical research funding a national priority. This unified call to action will raise awareness about the critical need for a sustained investment in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to improve health, spur more progress, inspire more hope and save more lives. On April 8, 2013, thousands of advocates, survivors, researchers, clinicians, business leaders and members of the general public will gather in our nation’s capital to speak with one voice at the Rally for Medical Research.

For those who cannot be in Washington, DC on April 8, the Rally will be streamed live over YouTube. Participating organizations will be provided with the YouTube link to share with their memberships, and the link will be posted on the Rally website at http://rallyformedicalresearch.org.

What is the goal of the event?
Federal funding for medical research continues to decline, threatening the future health of Americans and people around the world. The goal of the Rally for Medical Research is to unite millions of Americans across the country to call on our nation’s policymakers to make life-saving medical research funding a national priority. This unified call to action also will raise awareness among Members of Congress and the general public about the critical need for a sustained investment in the NIH. There must be a sustained effort to inform members of Congress and the general public about the importance of NIH to spurring more progress, inspiring more hope and saving more lives.
What is the role of the grassroots networks?
Grassroots activities of scientists, survivors and other advocates across the country will play a key role in the success and reach of the Rally because only a small percentage of those involved will be in Washington, DC on April 8 for the Rally itself. Given the millions of Americans who the participating organizations have the ability to reach, the effort presents a tremendous opportunity to send a powerful, coordinated message to Capitol Hill.

Grassroots efforts will build toward and center around April 8, the day of the Rally, which will be designated a “Day of Action to Rally for Medical Research.” Participating organizations will be provided with a simple, customizable, action-oriented message that can be sent to their members and volunteers. Advocates will be asked to take specific actions on April 8 such as:

- Send an email to or call congressional offices,
- Tweet members of Congress with a message or post on the member’s Facebook page,
- Write letters to the editor and place op-eds in newspapers across the country before and during the week of April 8, and
- Gather a group of individuals to schedule a meeting with their members of Congress’ district office.

Suggested Timeline for Coordinated Action
• The week of March 11: Announce the Rally for Medical Research and the Day of Action to members and advocates. Background on the event and a link to the website will be provided. Encourage members in the DC Metro area to plan to attend the Rally in person.

• March 20/21: Announce the upcoming congressional recess and encourage your members to consider attending local town halls and/or meeting with the member of Congress in the hometown office.

• March 29: Remind your network about the Day of Action with links to online tools and tips.
  o These will include email templates (and links to Capwiz) and sample tweets. We also will remind them about the live streaming of the event so that advocates can make plans to watch the Rally together if feasible.

• April 4: Remind your networks again to take action on Monday, April 8.

• April 8: Day of Action to Rally for Medical Research! The Rally itself will begin at 11 a.m. ET with live streaming over YouTube commencing at the same time. The Rally will end at approximately 12:15 p.m. ET.

Key Messages

➢ Medical research funded through the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the largest source of funding for medical research in the world, has been a driving
force behind many decades of advances that have improved the health of people in every corner of America.

- Thanks in part to NIH-funded research, Americans are living longer, healthier lives and advances that were once unimaginable, such as sequencing the human genome, have been achieved and have opened a world of unprecedented opportunities for science, medicine and health.

- We can do much more with a robust and sustained investment in medical research. Americans are getting older and chronic diseases consume the vast majority of our health care dollars. We can meet these challenges head-on, but in order to do so, medical research must be a strong national priority.

- The funding provided to the NIH does more than just save lives — it fuels the U.S. economy and creates jobs in our communities. NIH funding supports research by 325,000 scientists at more than 3000 universities, research institutions, small businesses and other entities across the U.S.

- In 2010, federal investment in NIH research had a 150 percent multiplier effect on the economy—leading to the creation of 484,939 jobs and generating $69 billion in new economic activity across the country.

- Sequestration, which took effect on March 1, slashed the NIH budget by 5.1 percent or approximately $1.5 billion. Recent cuts will worsen the devastating effect that nearly a decade of stagnant funding has had on the agency. The NIH has lost an estimated $5.5 billion (nearly 20 percent) in purchasing power since FY 2003 because funding has not kept pace with the rate of biomedical inflation, which is around 3 percent per year.
Cuts to the NIH are bad for the health of the American public and are bad for our nation’s our economy. A recent United for Medical Research analysis projects that 20,500 jobs and $3 billion in economic output will be lost as a result of the sequester cuts.

We cannot allow budget cuts to undermine progress in medical research, setting us back at a time when we are on the cusp of exciting new advances in cancer, infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS, heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer’s and many other diseases.

If Congress fails to make NIH funding a national priority, thousands of researchers across the country will be at serious risk of losing research grant funding, and with it the ability to carry out lifesaving research. Success rates already have reached 17 percent—a historic low--which means we could be leaving the next breakthrough or cure on the table.

As a result of decreased investment in NIH, a whole generation of younger scientists will be without the public funding they need at a significant stage in their careers, and these individuals will be lost to other careers or other countries, depleting our talent pool and delaying or forfeiting research opportunities for investigators and patients in the U.S.

Sample Action Alert

URGE YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS TO MAKE MEDICAL RESEARCH FUNDING A NATIONAL PRIORITY
With the recent enactment of the across-the-board cuts known as sequestration, federal funding for medical research continues to erode even further, sharply curtailing the progress in life-saving research during a time of enormous scientific and medical opportunities.

It is critical that we continue the vigorous pursuit of future breakthroughs in science, health and medicine that are supported through the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to improve the entire continuum of patient care, from prevention, early detection and diagnosis, to treatment and long-term survivorship. Further, the funding provided to the NIH does more than just save lives – it fuels the U.S. economy and creates jobs in our communities.

On April 8, millions of Americans from across the country will come together to Rally for Medical Research – a unified call to our nation’s policymakers to make life-saving medical research funding a national priority. This call to action will raise awareness about the critical need for a sustained investment in the NIH to improve health, spur more progress, inspire more hope and save more lives.

We respectfully urge you to reach out to your members of Congress and request that they work together in a bipartisan fashion to preserve the nation’s investment in medical research and the health of the American people. Sustained funding for the NIH is one of the most important investments our country can make, but our ability to do so is contingent on a strong, unwavering commitment from Congress.

Our message is very simple: Medical research funding must be a national priority – we cannot impede the remarkable progress that continues to save and improve the lives of millions of our nation’s citizens.

Take Action Now
Sample Tweets

On Twitter, please use the hashtag #RallyMedRes. Remember, these tweets are helpful to not only mobilize your network and promote the Rally, but tweets can also gain the attention of policymakers as they see their Twitter handles appear in our tweets. For a complete list of members and their Twitter handles as well as other social media accounts, please see these House and Senate lists.

For those relatively new to Twitter, we recommend the Twitter 101 Guide from Half in Ten/Center for American Progress.

Below are sample tweets and templates to consider:

**Template**
- [insert member Twitter handle] Please make NIH funding a national priority — invest in protecting Americans’ health! #RallyMedRes

**Sample**
- @MaxBaucus Please make NIH funding a national priority — invest in protecting Americans’ health! #RallyMedRes

**Template (links to Rally Website)**
If you’d prefer to use your own URL shortener, please use this URL:

- [insert member Twitter handle] 80+ national organizations are rallying to support prioritizing the NIH http://ow.ly/iAutA #RallyMedRes

**Sample**
• @MaxBaucus 80+ national organizations are rallying to support prioritizing the NIH http://ow.ly/iAutA #RallyMedRes

**Template**

• [insert member Twitter handle] #Sequestration slashed the NIH budget 5% — unacceptable when millions count on lifesaving research #RallyMedRes

**Sample**

• @MaxBaucus #Sequestration slashed the NIH budget 5% — unacceptable when millions count on lifesaving research #RallyMedRes

*Source: Adapted from materials developed by the Coalition for Health Funding and NDD United and available at [http://publichealthfunding.org/index.php/ndd_united1/](http://publichealthfunding.org/index.php/ndd_united1/)*

**Sample Facebook Posts**

We encourage you to post to your own Facebook pages and to the pages of members of Congress. When adding a link to your post, please delete the URL’s text from the post once Facebook automatically adds a link preview.

• I am someone/I have a loved one who is affected by [insert disease]. That’s why federal support of medical research is so important to me. NIH funding must be a national priority, so join me and @[insert your organization here] in taking action today.
  
• We have much to lose and nothing to gain by federal decision making that stalls U.S. medical progress, in [disease] research and other areas. Tell Congress: We Need Cures, Not Cuts.


• Medical research is important to me because [insert personal reason here]. That’s why I’m joining the @[organization name] to rally for medical research and urge Congress to make NIH funding a national priority! Learn more at


Sample Letter to the Editor and Op-Ed

To the Editor:

As Congress continues to seek solutions to the many challenging budget issues, I urge Representative [YOUR REPRESENTATIVE’S NAME HERE] and Senators [YOUR SENATORS’ NAMES HERE] to make medical research a national priority and oppose cutting funding to the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Sequestration has resulted in a 5.1% cut to the NIH budget, which means the impact on jobs and economic activity is staggering: a likely loss of 20,500 jobs across the United States and a $3 billion decline in economic activity. These cuts—layered on top of the existing lack of consistency and predictability in the level of medical research funding—have already introduced tremendous uncertainty in the medical research ecosystem and are encouraging investigators with promising research proposals to pursue opportunities abroad. If
lawmakers can’t put politics aside to avoid it, these cuts will compromise our nation’s security, global competitiveness, and economic growth.

NIH research funding is an investment in our country’s future. I will be watching for our congressional delegation’s leadership on this issue.

[NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[PHONE]
[EMAIL]

Source: Adapted from a sample Letter to the Editor created by the Coalition for the Life Sciences and available at www.coalitionforlifesciences.org

Op-Ed: We need cures, not cuts

Federal funding for medical research, coupled with private-sector innovation, has revolutionized medicine in this country and throughout the world. HIV is no longer a death sentence, polio has been virtually eradicated, and we now have vaccines and antivirals that reduce hospitalizations from the flu and dangerous flu-related infections. We are closer than ever to a universal flu vaccine. [Insert Personal Story]

There’s no question that a strong investment in medical research reaps significant benefits for patients and future generations. Yet, agencies that fund research such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have seen their budgets slashed by 5 percent as a result of the recent implementation of automatic, across-the-board cuts known as sequestration—cuts that invariably will compromise efforts to prevent and combat disease. Policymakers can rethink these cuts and address deficit reduction in a pragmatic, rather than expedient manner.
The question is, will they? Patients are dying to know.

This isn’t just a health issue; it’s an economic one. In 2011 alone, research produced $62 billion in new economic activity and led to the creation of more than 430,000 jobs. In this challenging climate, continued budget cuts will result in job loss at research universities, medical schools and independent research institutes, as well as in the device, drug and biologics industries and the thousands of businesses that support our nation’s research enterprise. [Insert examples]

We risk losing our position as a global leader in R&D if federal funding continues to decline. China, for example, recognizes the importance of research to economic growth and population health and has already made significant efforts to strengthen policies and investments. At the same time, U.S. investment is stagnating, and now cuts to research have gone into effect. We cannot take our current leadership position for granted. We need to work vigorously to invest in the research infrastructure to attract talent and private-sector investments.

Medical research is fundamental to our health and economic prosperity. A lackluster commitment from Congress and the failure to make NIH funding a national priority will jeopardize efforts to strengthen our research infrastructure and eliminate current and emerging health threats. We need cures, not cuts.

Source: Adapted from a sample Op-ed developed by Research!America and available at www.SaveResearch.org