

September 21, 2015

Francis Collins, MD, PhD
Director
National Institutes of Health
1 Center Drive, MSC 0148
Bethesda, MD 20892-0148

Lawrence A. Tabak, DDS, PhD
Principal Deputy Director
National Institutes of Health
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Bethesda, MD 20892-2290

Dear Dr. Collins and Dr. Tabak,

The Endocrine Society appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the framework for the National Institutes of Health Strategic Plan. We submitted comments through the NIH on-line form, but because of the importance of this issue, I also wanted to send you a summary of our thoughts. Many of our members are NIH-funded investigators who conduct research exploring the disease areas at the interface between institutes. For example, endocrine scientists are working to understand how disrupted hormonal systems and signaling networks between different organ systems contribute to disease.

The Society is encouraged that the new framework emphasizes the interrelated aspects of fundamental science, health promotion/disease prevention, and treatments/cures. We believe that endocrine systems and hormonal status are central to all three of these themes, and therefore should be explicitly incorporated into the plan. Research on hormones and endocrine science is uniquely cross-cutting. According to a recent Endocrine Society survey, at least 18 different NIH Institutes and Centers fund Endocrine Society member research programs. However, we are concerned that the lack of a well-defined strategic focus on endocrinology creates barriers to the integration of endocrinology into NIH programs and initiatives. For example, study sections and review groups may not appreciate how endocrinology and hormone health are related to cancer initiation and progression. We anticipate that an emphasis on endocrinology in the NIH-wide strategic plan will underscore the importance of hormones and hormonal systems to the broader biomedical research community.

The Endocrine Society is also pleased that the framework emphasizes the importance of research in prevention of disease. We hope that the final strategic plan will acknowledge the importance of good environmental health and reducing chemical exposures to prevent disease. We know that exposure to endocrine disrupting chemicals contributes to increased risk for diseases such as breast cancer, obesity, and diabetes. More research is needed to understand the fundamental links between exposures and human clinical endpoints. We believe that a strategic focus on early life exposures and developmental origins of health and disease could prove transformative in efforts to prevent disease.



Thank you for considering the Endocrine Society's comments. We look forward to continuing to work with the NIH in the development of the Strategic Plan. If we can be of any assistance in your efforts, please do not hesitate to contact Joseph Laakso, Associate Director of Science Policy, at jlaakso@endocrine.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa H. Fish MD".

Lisa Fish, MD
President
Endocrine Society