



August 14, 2015

Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D.
Director
National Institutes of Health
Building 1
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

Via electronic submission

Request for Information (RFI): Inviting Comments and Suggestions on a Framework for the NIH-wide Strategic Plan

Notice Number: NOT-OD-15-118

Dear Director Collins,

The [Alliance for Aging Research](http://www.agingresearch.org) is the leading non-profit organization dedicated to accelerating the pace of scientific discoveries and their application to improve the experience of aging and health. We believe advances in the science of aging hold great promise for moderating health costs while improving the lives of millions of older Americans. We urge the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to consider the inclusion of the cost to public healthcare programs into its priority setting for research and funding opportunities. Further, we feel that the NIH's Common Fund should be utilized for age-related initiatives to more rapidly identify and validate cross-cutting disease pathways for improved targeting of interventions for multiple diseases of aging.

The United States population is aging at an unprecedented rate. The 2010 Census projected the United States will undergo a doubling of the population 65 years and older, a tripling of 80 and older, and quadrupling of nonagenarians and centenarians by 2050. As the population of America ages, the number of American's living with costly chronic conditions is expected to rise. According to the Congressional Budget Office, between 2014 and 2050, the Medicare population is projected to grow from 54 to 93 million beneficiaries, and during this time period, net Medicare spending is expected to rise from 3.0% of GDP to 5.5% in 2050. Much of this increase in cost will be attributed to chronic and degenerative diseases for which age is the greatest risk factor. To see a greater return on public investment in research, the NIH should amend its priority setting to include the impact a disease has on costs to Medicare and Medicaid in addition to scientific needs and opportunities, gaps in funded research, the burden of disease in a population, and public health need. When considering the shared effects of America's aging population and increasing life

expectancy on the cost to public healthcare programs, the necessity for aging-related research becomes almost incontrovertible.

The NIH needs to address aging head on by increasing funding for cutting edge translational and basic research. The research required to further scientific understanding of the aging process and to develop healthy aging interventions will need to be multidisciplinary, involve multiple investigators, and be flexible enough to adapt to new research and discoveries. The Common Fund program was created to support this type of broad research. We strongly urge the NIH to apply Common Fund resources to fulfill one or more of the published consensus [recommendations](#) that came out of the October 2013 Trans-NIH Geroscience Interest Group Summit.

Thank you for releasing this Request for Information and for your commitment to engaging the advocacy community as you develop the 5-year Strategic Plan. Please contact our Public Policy Assistant, Ryne Carney, at rcarney@agingresearch.org or (202) 293-2856, if you have any questions or would like to follow up on our recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Peschin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Peschin, MHS
President and CEO, Alliance for Aging Research
Chair, Friends of the NIA (FoNIA)