



National Institute of
Arthritis and Musculoskeletal
and Skin Diseases

Minutes of Meeting

April 21, 2025

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
NATIONAL ARTHRITIS AND MUSCULOSKELETAL AND SKIN DISEASES
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

MINUTES OF THE 116th MEETING

I. CLOSED SESSION

This portion of the meeting was closed to the public in accordance with the determination that it concerned matters exempt from mandatory disclosure under Section 552b(c)(4), Title 5, U.S. Code and Section 10(d) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended. Members exited the meeting during the discussion and voting process on applications from their own institutions or other applications that presented a potential conflict of interest, real or apparent. Members signed a statement to this effect.

II. CALL TO ORDER

The 116th meeting of the National Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases Advisory Council (NAMSAC) was held on April 21, 2025, via videocast. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Lindsey A. Criswell, Director, National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS).

Attendance

Council members present:

Dr. Edward Botchwey, Professor of Medicine, Wallace H. Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering, Georgia Institute of Technology
Ms. Ann Elderkin, Consultant, American Society for Bone and Mineral Research (ASBMR)
Dr. Sarah Gebauer, Professor, Saint Louis University School of Medicine, *Ad Hoc Member*
Dr. Karl Jepsen, Associate Dean for Research, Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery, Professor of Biomedical Engineering, University of Michigan
Dr. Douglas Kiel, Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School and Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
Dr. Xiaojuan Li, Director, Program for Advanced Musculoskeletal Imaging, Cleveland Clinic
Dr. Elizabeth McNally, Elizabeth J. Ward Professor of Genetic Medicine, and Director, Center for Genetic Medicine, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine
Dr. Rebecca Minnillo, Chief Program and Development Officer, Society for Investigative Dermatology
Dr. Kristin Morgan, Associate Professor, University of Connecticut, *Ad Hoc Member*
Dr. Aimee Payne, Chair of the Department of Dermatology, Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons
Ms. Sharon Smith-Terry, Chief Executive Officer, Orthopaedic Research Society
Dr. Melissa Spencer, Professor of Neurology and Director, Neuromuscular Division, Department of Neurology, University of California, Los Angeles

Mr. Steven Taylor, President and Chief Executive Officer, Arthritis Foundation
Dr. Jinoos Yazdany, Chief, Division of Rheumatology, Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital

Staff

The following NIAMS staff attended:

Staff

Dr. Lindsey Criswell
Dr. Anna Mazzucco
Dr. Darren Sledjeski
Dr. Tamara Alliston
Dr. Robert Carter
Dr. Gayle Lester
Dr. Mary Garcia-Cazarin
Anamika Singh
Dr. Aneliya Velkova
Dr. Anita Undale
Catherine Joffe
Charmaine Hutcherson
Dr. Chiguang Feng
Christopher Nee
Dillon Chung-Chun-Lam
Dr. Aron Marquitz
Dr. Charles Washabaugh
Dr. Dandre Thornhill
Dr. Heiyoung Park
Dr. Isaah Vincent
Dr. Melissa Green-Parker
Dr. Peter Koch
Dr. Su-Yu Mao
Dr. Xibin Wang
Dr. Xincheng Zheng
Elisa Weiss
Dr. Emily Carifi
Dr. Faye Chen
Herman Utama
Dr. Hiu Wan Law
Jo-Anthony Davis
Jonathan Bernstein
Judith Spector
Justine Buschman
Dr. Kan Ma
Kandace Kimber
Kathy Salaita

Kriti Sharma
Dr. Majorie Lindhurst
Mark Brown
Melinda Nelson
Pamela Beheler
Richard Phillips
Dr. Robert Colbert
Ryan Lombardi
Sara Myers
Shalanda Wellington
Sheila Simmons
Dr. Stephanie Burrows
Susana Serrate-Sztein
Dr. Sushmita Purkayastha
Tanisha Brown-Caines
Teresa Do
Timothy Edgerton
Dr. Van Nguyen
Dr. Yasuko Furumoto
Yen Thach

A total of 105 NIH staff and members of the public watched via NIH Videocast.

III. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS/FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING DATES

Dr. Lindsey Criswell, NIAMS Director, called to order the 116th meeting of the NIAMS Advisory Council at 10:30 a.m. Dr. Darren Sledjeski, NAMSAC Executive Secretary, reviewed the logistics for the meeting. He noted that members of the public may submit written comments at the email address NIAMScouncilmail@niams.nih.gov up to 15 days following the meeting. Dr. Sledjeski reminded Council members of their conflict of interest obligations under federal law and the yearly conflict of interest reporting deadlines in February, June, and October. He noted that the minutes of the September 17, 2024 Council meeting are available in the Electronic Council Book, as is the report of the NIAMS Board of Scientific Counselors.

The dates of the next four Council meetings are June 3, 2025; October 14, 2025; January 27, 2026; and June 2, 2026. The Council will meet in closed session only in August 2025, with the date to be determined. Going forward the plan is to hold spring meetings in person, fall meetings in a hybrid format, and winter meetings virtually.

Dr. Sledjeski noted that the concept clearances originally scheduled to be presented during this meeting would instead be covered at the June meeting.

Dr. Criswell led Council members and other attendees in a round of introductions.

IV. NIAMS DIRECTOR'S REPORT AND DISCUSSION

Dr. Criswell began her remarks with an overview of recent changes at NIAMS and across the NIH. In March, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services announced a restructuring effort which will centralize NIH's procurement, human resources, and communications across the 27 Institutes and Centers. Grants, funding policies and processes are evolving as NIH aligns with new agency priorities. Dr. Criswell encouraged attendees to check the NIH Grants & Funding website regularly for updated information. She emphasized NIAMS's commitment to advancing research that will improve the lives of people with autoimmune, bone, joint, muscle, rheumatic, and skin conditions, as well as working with the Council to identify the best science in these areas, as consistent with the administration's priorities.

Dr. Criswell formally introduced two new Council members: Ms. Sharon Smith-Terry and Dr. Melissa Spencer. She also welcomed the two ad hoc Council members for this meeting, drawn from the pool of NIAMS mentored award grantees: Dr. Sarah Gebauer from Saint Louis University School of Medicine and Dr. Kristin Morgan from the University of Connecticut.

Personnel Changes

Dr. Criswell reviewed several personnel changes within NIH and NIAMS. On February 13, 2025 Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. was sworn in as the 26th Secretary of HHS, and on April 1st, 2025 Dr. Jayanta Bhattacharya became the 18th Director of the NIH. Dr. Anna Mazzucco is the new NIAMS Deputy Director; she initially joined NIAMS on a detail from the NIH's Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives (DPCPSI) and previously served as the NIH's Acting Associate Deputy Director. Dr. Tamara Alliston is the new Scientific Director of the NIAMS Intramural Research Program. Prior to joining NIAMS, Dr. Alliston advanced her career over two decades at the University of California, San Francisco. She assumed the role vacated by Dr. John O'Shea, who served as the NIAMS Scientific Director for two decades.

After more than 25 years of dedication to NIAMS, Dr. Gayle Lester will retire from her role as the Director of the Division of Extramural Research at the end of April 2025. Dr. Mary Garcia-Cazarin, will serve as interim director until a permanent replacement is found. Since the last Council meeting, two new program directors have joined the Institute: Dr. Melissa Green Parker and Dr. Anita Undale.

Fiscal Year 2025 Budget

Dr. Criswell updated the Council on the current status of the NIH and NIAMS budgets. NIH is currently operating under the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act of 2025 (H.R. 1968). Under the Act, NIAMS's FY 2025 enacted budget equals the comparable budget from FY 2024, which is \$685,465,000. At the beginning of the fiscal year the pay line was set at the eighth percentile to allow NIAMS more flexibility to look critically at the grants that it funds. Program directors will continue to scrutinize the meritorious applications in their portfolios that score beyond the pay line to identify high priority projects.

NIH and NIAMS Activities

Dr. Criswell announced the publication of the NIAMS Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2025-2029. The plan was drafted with extensive input from Council members, extramural and intramural researchers, health care professionals, patient advocates, and scientific and professional organizations. The plan is organized around four overarching goals and ten priorities to advance NIAMS's mission. Dr. Criswell gave several examples of existing extramural and intramural research that aligns with the plan's goals and priorities.

Three NIAMS researchers successfully competed for the NIH Office of Autoimmune Disease Research Awards for work that falls under Priority 1: studying molecular and cellular mechanisms of health and disease in humans and understanding the resulting phenotypes and endotypes. The work of Drs. Sahar Lotfi-Emran and Bob Colbert uses an established, inclusive database and biorepository to identify CD8-positive T cells whose clonal expansion implicates a pathogenic contribution to axial spondyloarthritis progression. Dr. Chris Nagao's work dissects the interaction of the human herpesvirus 6B virus with immune cells in the context of drug-induced hypersensitivity syndrome, with the goal of understanding how, when reactivated in the context of the syndrome, the virus might contribute to the breakdown of immunologic tolerance that results in the development of autoimmune disease.

NIAMS is co-funding an award with the NIH Office of Research on Women's Health to Columbia University to oversee the newly created Network for Exposomics in the U.S. Coordinating Center (NEXUS). NEXUS will support the use of exposomics across NIH, engage with academic, community, and industry partners, and grow the field of exposomics through scientific boot camps, conferences, and other learning opportunities, with an emphasis on overcoming socioeconomic inequities.

Dr. Criswell highlighted two recent NIH-wide policy changes. As of January 2025, most research project grant applications submitted to NIH will be assessed using simplified review criteria. NIH established these simplified criteria to address the complexity of the peer review process and the potential for reputational bias to affect outcomes. The simplified framework retains the five regulatory criteria (significance, investigators, innovation, approach, and environment) and reorganizes them into three factors: importance of the research; rigor and feasibility; and expertise and resources. Two of these factors will receive numerical criterion scores, while the third will be evaluated for sufficiency. While these changes impact how an application is reviewed, they do not change how the application is developed. Reviewers will be provided training and guidance materials in the spring of 2025, ahead of the first review meetings in summer 2025.

On March 6, NIH announced plans to centralize peer review of applications within the NIH Center for Scientific Review (CSR). The NIAMS Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases Clinical Trials Study Section (AMSC) and Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases Study Section (AMS) will be discontinued after they review any applications that are coming before the Council for a vote at the June meeting.

To further commitment to the principles of transparency and accessibility in NIH-funded research, NIH released a new Public Access Policy that will accelerate broad access to NIH-funded research results. Among other changes, the policy removes the 12-month embargo period

before manuscripts resulting from NIH funding must be made publicly available. The revised policy will go into effect for peer-reviewed manuscripts accepted on or after December 31, 2025.

Dr. Criswell noted that some funding opportunities have been sunsetted or updated to align with agency priorities and encouraged all potential applicants to reread funding opportunities carefully for any changes prior to submission.

V. REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS

The 116th National Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases Advisory Council met in virtually on April 21, 2025. Twelve Council members and two Ad-Hoc Council members attended virtually. En bloc concurrence was unanimously approved for 818 primary and 191 secondary applications. The total cost requested in a year - 01 for all applications was \$267,026,803.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The 116th National Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases Advisory Council adjourned at 11:16 a.m. Proceedings of the public portion of this meeting are recorded in this summary.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing summary and attachments are accurate and complete.

Darren Sledjeski, Ph.D.
Executive Secretary, National Arthritis and
Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases
Advisory Council
Director, Division of Extramural Activities
National Institute of Arthritis and
Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases

Lindsey A. Criswell, M.D., M.P.H., D.Sc.
Chair, National Arthritis and
Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases
Advisory Council
Director, National Institute of Arthritis and
Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases