



Consortium of Social Science Associations

National Advisory Mental Health Council Meets

June 2, 2014

On May 22, the National Advisory Mental Health Council (NAMHC) held its spring meeting. In his report to NAMHC, National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) director Tom Insel highlighted the recent increased attention to mental health, particularly the mental health care system. Insel made the point that when it comes to mental illnesses, there are ten times the number of people in the criminal justice system than in mental health facilities. Mental health care is expensive because we are paying for it in all the wrong places, said Insel.

Insel noted that application submissions responding to six funding opportunity announcements (FOAs) issued in FY 2014 for the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative will be reviewed in June and funded before the start of the next fiscal year on October 1, 2014. While a focus of the White House, a NIMH advisory group has been examining what it is that the NIH can do. The FOAs were based on the recommendations from an Advisory Committee to the NIH Director (ACD) working group, which is expected to release its report at the June 5-6 ACD meeting on the NIH campus. The report will provide the agency with additional recommendations for research areas that can be supported with BRAIN Initiative funds. Accordingly, additional FOAs will be issued in 2015 as soon as the Institute has a sense of its FY 2015 budget. The project, supported by the White House, will increase to approximately \$500 million a year and will be used to grow new tools for science, Insel explained. More important, the additional funding will become part of the agency's base. The President has called for a doubling of federal investment in the BRAIN Initiative in FY 2015.

Insel reported NIMH's new priorities include the recently announced new experimental therapeutics approach to clinical trials and released new clinical trials funding opportunities. The FOAs, collectively, define the agency's focus in this area. He stressed that the shift in focus is intended to accelerate treatment development and bring improved therapies to those with mental disorders. These include: Exploratory Clinical Trials of Novel Interventions for Mental Disorders ([RFA-MH-15-300](#); [RFA-MH-15-310](#)); First in Human and Early State Clinical Trials of Novel Investigational Drugs or Devices for Psychiatric Disorders ([PAR-14-107](#)); Pilot Effectiveness Studies and Services Research Grants ([RFA-MH-15-330](#)); Clinical Trials to Test the Effectiveness of Treatment, Preventive, and Services Interventions ([RFA-MH-15-320](#); [RFA-MH-15-325](#)); and Confirmatory Efficacy Clinical Trials of Non-Pharmacological Interventions for Mental Disorders ([RFA-MH-15-340](#)).

Insel highlighted several activities to which the Institute is attending. He also noted that recent congressional attention could change the approach to mental health research. The recent focus on serious mental illness by the Congress will increase the collaboration between NIMH and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), including supporting the development of a

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coordinated specialty care for first-episode psychosis based on the NIMH's Recovery After an Initial Schizophrenia Episode (RAISE) program. NIMH was directed in the *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014*, to collaborate with SAMHSA in developing input for states regarding what are promising first episodes. He drew attention to the release of the first prioritized suicide research [agenda](#), *A Prioritized Research Agenda for Suicide Prevention: An Action Plan to Save Lives*, which seeks to more rapidly develop suicide research, including reducing suicide deaths and attempts by 20 percent in five years and by 40 percent or greater in ten years, "if multiple actions, informed by research, were fully implemented." He also announced the publication of three primary data [papers](#) by the project researchers of the Army Study to Assess Risk and Resilience in Servicemembers (Army STARRS).

The NAMHC was apprised of NIMH program updates. Insel announced the creation of the new Research Domain Criteria (RDoc) Unit within the NIMH Office of the Director. It will be led by Bruce Cuthbert, currently the director of the Division of Adult Translational Research (DATR). RDoc has been a top priority for the Institute and responds to the NIMH Strategic Plan calling "for the development, for research purposes, of new ways of classifying psychopathology based on dimensions of observable behavior and neurobiological measures." The project, Insel explained, is designed to transform diagnosis by incorporating genetics, imaging, cognitive science, and other levels of information to lay the foundation for a new classification system. Insel also announced the Institute's plans to merge the DATR and the Division of Developmental Translational Research into an integrated Division of Translational Research, effective October 1, 2014.

