



May 30, 2023

Hugh Auchincloss, M.D.  
Acting Director  
National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases  
9000 Rockville Pike  
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Dr. Auchincloss:

The Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA) and its HIV Medicine Association (HIVMA) strongly support the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases' (NIAID) commitment to strengthening the pipeline for early career researchers. We represent more than 14,000 infectious diseases (ID) and HIV physicians, physician-scientists and other clinicians and public health professionals on the front lines of infectious disease and HIV research, prevention, and treatment.

Recently, we were dismayed to see the paylines announced on April 5 of just 20 for K awards except K22 and K99. These low paylines, which have not been increased in several years, will likely result in rejections of highly qualified applicants, further shrinking the already inadequate pipeline of ID physician-scientists, with long-term consequences for the field. We are extremely concerned that there is not enough support for early career physician-scientists specializing in ID and HIV research, greatly compromising the ID field.

In 2022, just over half of ID physician training programs filled their training slots; by comparison, most other physician specialties filled nearly all their programs. We need to train more ID physician-scientists to continue to address knowledge gaps. This will require more support from NIAID for career development awards. Challenges in recruiting and training enough ID physicians, including ID physician-scientists, will persist if there is insufficient support for early career scientists. A failure to make necessary investments now will yield dire consequences for the future of ID research.

Our members report examples of highly qualified early career ID physician-scientists being turned down for K awards multiple times in favor of applicants with more years of experience and more extensive publications. This seems to run counter to our shared goal of supporting early career ID researchers and does not help to build the pipeline of physician-scientists needed in the future.

Despite having a higher total budget than many other institutes at NIH, NIAID only funded 81 K grants in the most recent fiscal year for which data is available, at the same time that NIAID received funding increases from Congress.<sup>1</sup> While success rates at NIAID are reasonably close to those of other institutes, several other institutes with lower levels of funding awarded the same number or higher numbers of K grants. Qualified applicants will move into other areas of research if they do not receive support early in their careers. Therefore, we urge NIAID to direct more attention and funding to qualified early career ID physician-scientists.

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<sup>1</sup> NIAID Career Development Awards: <https://report.nih.gov/funding/nih-budget-and-spending-data-past-fiscal-years/success-rates>

	FY2022 Enacted	FY2022 Number of K Awards	FY2022 Total Amount K Awards	FY2022 Number of K23 Awards
<b>NCI</b>	\$6,912,522,000	130	\$24,174,293	0
<b>NIAID</b>	\$6,322,728,000	81	\$12,728,565	18
<b>NIA</b>	\$4,219,936,000	132	\$17,671,612	17
<b>NHLBI</b>	\$3,808,494,000	181	\$28,309,581	60
<b>NIGMS</b>	\$3,092,373,000	50	\$5,268,574	3
<b>NINDS</b>	\$2,535,370,000	80	\$13,407,385	24

To better incentivize early career physician-scientists to pursue ID research, IDSA and HIVMA urge NIAID to increase existing K award paylines and consider implementing additional mechanisms to improve the funding landscape for early career researchers.

Thank you for your attention to these critical issues. We would appreciate meeting with you at your earliest convenience and look forward to continued collaboration with NIAID on efforts to strengthen the ID physician-scientist workforce. Please contact Eli Briggs, IDSA director of public policy, at [ebriggs@idsociety.org](mailto:ebriggs@idsociety.org) for further information and scheduling.

Sincerely,



Carlos del Rio, MD, FIDSA  
President, IDSA



Michelle Simone Cespedes, MD, MS  
Chair, HIVMA