



WOMEN
FIRST
RESEARCH
COALITION

Women First Research Coalition

WFRC Third Quarter 2023 Activities Update

Organizational Activities

WFRC Names New Co-Chairs

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Marianna Alperin and Dr. Mostafa Borahay have been elected as the WFRC co-chairs for 2023-2024. Below, please find the bios for Drs. Alperin and Borahay. We look forward to their leadership for the coming year! We also appreciate the work of our past co-chairs who are rotating off, Dr. Abbey Berenson and Dr. Melissa Simon. Dr. Irina Burd and Dr. Lisa Barroilhet will remain as the past co-chairs for 2023-2024.

Marianna Alperin, MD, MS, is Professor of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Sciences; Professor of Urology; and a Fellowship Research Director at University of California San Diego (UCSD). She is a physician scientist who has established a thriving basic science program at UCSD. Her scientific expertise is at the intersection of pelvic soft tissue biology, biomechanics, muscle physiology, acellular biomaterials, and muscle stem cell biology. Dr. Alperin runs an NIH-funded laboratory and provides clinical care for women with pelvic floor disorder. She has held leadership roles throughout her career, and is currently the Chair of the Health Sciences Faculty Council. She serves as an Associate Editor for Translational Gynecology at the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, serves as a reviewer for many journals, serves on multiple NIH study sections, and chairs the Pelvic Floor Foundation Grants Committee at AUGS. Dr. Alperin also thrives in contributing to the DEI mission in her professional settings. She is representing the American Urogynecologic Society in the WFRC.

Mostafa Borahay, MD, PhD is Associate Professor and the Director of the Division of General Obstetrics and Gynecology at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center, Baltimore, MD. He is a physician scientist with a special focus on Uterine Fibroids and Menstrual Disorders. He is the Principal Investigator on 3 NIH grants and co-Investigator on several other grants. He is the PI of NIH grant R01HD094380 titled Mechanisms of Action(s) of Simvastatin in Uterine Leiomyoma; R01HD111243 titled Role of Senescent Cells in Uterine Fibroid Pathogenesis; and 3R01HD094380-04S1 titled COVID-19 Vaccination and Menstruation. Dr. Borahay has more than 90 peer-reviewed papers, published 2 gynecology textbooks, is Associate Editor at the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology and is a standing member of the NIH study section for Gynecology, Andrology and Reproduction. He is representing the Society for Academic Specialists in General Obstetrics and Gynecology in the WFRC.

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF OBSTETRICIANS & GYNECOLOGISTS • AMERICAN GYNECOLOGICAL & OBSTETRICAL SOCIETY • AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE • AMERICAN UROGYNECOLOGIC SOCIETY • COUNCIL OF UNIVERSITY CHAIRS IN OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY • INFECTIOUS DISEASE SOCIETY FOR OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY • NORTH AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR PEDIATRIC AND ADOLESCENT GYNECOLOGY • SOCIETY FOR ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY • SOCIETY FOR ACADEMIC SPECIALISTS IN GENERAL OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY • SOCIETY OF FAMILY PLANNING • SOCIETY OF GYNECOLOGIC ONCOLOGY • SOCIETY FOR MATERNAL-FETAL MEDICINE • SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE ENDOCRINOLOGY AND INFERTILITY • SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE INVESTIGATION • SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S HEALTH RESEARCH

Legislative Activities

Update on Fiscal Year 2024 Appropriations

Congress is barreling towards a government shutdown beginning on October 1 if they cannot come to an agreement on a continuing resolution (CR) before the fiscal year ends on September 30. As of press time, the House and the Senate have not come to an agreement on passing a CR that could pass both chambers, which makes it extremely likely that there will be at least a short-term lapse in government funding.

Congress did make some progress on the Fiscal Year 2024 Labor, Health & Human Services, Education and Related Programs (Labor-HHS) appropriations bill over the summer. On July 27, the Senate passed their version by a bipartisan vote of 26-2. We were pleased that the Senate report included two of the WFRC's report language requests, on the BIRCWH program and the Reproductive Medicine Network. In fact, the report provided \$7 million for BIRCWH, which is \$1 million more than the WFRC requested. While the report did not include additional funding for the WRHR program, it did include similar report language to what we had requested encouraging NICHD to fund additional scholars.

Here are the highlights of women's health research funding included in the bill:

- \$47.8 billion for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) , which is a \$943 million increase over FY 2023
- \$1.759 billion for the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)
- \$76.480 million for the Office of Research on Women's Health, which includes \$7 million for the BIRCWH program
- \$10 million increase for the IMPROVE Initiative on maternal mortality
- \$1.5 billion for the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health (ARPA-H)

The House Appropriations Committee did release their FY 2024 Labor-HHS bill as well, but the bill did not have a full committee mark-up before Congress left for the August recess. The bill cut NIH funding by \$3.8 billion, with a \$1 billion cut to ARPA-H funding. Since the House Appropriations Committee has yet to release the report accompanying the bill, we do not have details about what was included.

BIRCWH Program Advocacy Efforts

WFRC held meetings with seven Senate Republicans as part of our outreach to gain bipartisan support for the BIRCWH program. We met with Senators Katie Britt (R-AL), Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Deb Fischer (R-NE), John Kennedy (R-LA), John Cornyn (R-TX), Ron Johnson (R-WI), and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN). We primarily targeted Senators who have BIRCWH programs, as well as members of the Senate Appropriations Committee. We will continue this outreach during the fall and spring as we start to plan for Fiscal Year 2025.

Agency Outreach

NIA-WFRC Meeting

WFRC met with the National Institute of Aging (NIA) on August 31 to discuss issues related to aging and women's health research. NIA Director Dr. Hodes provided a presentation on research updates from the NIA, and WFRC members had the opportunity to share our research priorities. The NIA team shared that the menopause RCDC is currently being drafted and they hope to see it implemented in Calendar Year 2024. As a reminder, the WFRC successfully advocated for the creation of the menopause RCDC in the Fiscal Year 2023 appropriations process.

Outreach to Center for Scientific Review

As a follow-up from the WFRC's recent meeting with Dr. Clayton at ORWH, the WFRC has reached out to the Center for Scientific Review (CSR) to set up a meeting to discuss ways to improve the study sections for women's health research. We are working to schedule a meeting for a date to be determined in November. WFRC staff will work with WFRC leadership and members to develop an agenda for the meeting once it is scheduled.

Agency Activities

Dr. Bertagnolli's Nomination Moves Forward in the Senate

Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT), chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, has agreed to move forward with a hearing in October on the nomination of Dr. Monica Bertagnolli as the Director of the NIH. This comes after the White House released more information on implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act relating to lowering prescription drug prices, which Senator Sanders had wanted to see movement on before taking up the nomination.

Upcoming NIH Meetings

The next [meeting](#) of the NIH Advisory Committee on Research on Women's Health will be held on October 18. The BIRCWH 2023 [Annual Meeting](#) will be held on December 5.

Dr. Bertagnolli's Nomination Moves Forward in the Senate

The NIH is accepting [applications](#) for Fiscal Year 2024 NIH Loan Repayment Program (LRP) awards until November 16, 2023. LRP grants can repay up to \$100,000 of qualified educational debt for eligible participants who agree to perform NIH-related research.

Funding Opportunities from NIH I/Cs

Translational Research in Maternal and Pediatric Pharmacology and Therapeutics (R01 Clinical Trial Optional)

[\(PAR-23-130\)](#)

Application due date: October 5, 2023 (new applications)

November 5, 2023 (renewal/resubmission/revision)

Investigator-Initiated Research in Genomics and Health Equity (R01 Clinical Trial Optional)

[\(RFA-HG-23-017\)](#)

Earliest application submission date: October 8, 2023

Application due date: November 8, 2023

Investigator-Initiated Research in Genomics and Health Equity (R21 Clinical Trial Optional)

[\(RFA-HG-23-018\)](#)

Earliest application submission date: October 8, 2023

Application due date: November 8, 2023

Translational Research in Maternal and Pediatric Pharmacology and Therapeutics (R21 Clinical Trial Optional)

[\(PAR-23-131\)](#)

Application due date: October 16, 2023 (new applications)

November 16, 2023 (renewal/resubmission/revision)

Native American Research Centers for Health (NARCH) (S06 Clinical Trial Optional)

[\(PAR-23-166\)](#)

Application due date: July 8, 2024

Application due date for AIDS-related Research: August 7, 2024

Notice of Special Interest (NOSI): Administrative Supplements to Promote Research Continuity and Retention of NIH Mentored Career Development (K) Award Recipients and Scholars

[\(NOT-OD-23-031\)](#)

Submission dates vary by awarding ICO.

NOSI: Administrative Supplement for Continuity of Biomedical and Behavioral Research Among First-Time Recipients of NIH Research Project Grant Awards

[\(NOT-OD-23-032\)](#)

Submission dates vary by awarding ICO