



Strengthening Medical and Scientific Innovation Through Robust NIH Funding

The Role of NIH in Advancing Medical Research

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the primary federal agency responsible for funding biomedical and clinical research in the United States. NIH-supported research has been foundational to many of the most significant medical breakthroughs, including lifesaving vaccines, modern cancer therapies, and advances in cardiovascular care.

Decades of NIH investment were instrumental in the development of antiretroviral therapies, transforming HIV/AIDS from a near-certain fatal diagnosis into a chronic, manageable condition for millions of patients worldwide. NIH-funded basic and clinical research laid the groundwork for these therapies, demonstrating how sustained federal investment can fundamentally change the trajectory of disease and dramatically improve both survival and quality of life.

NIH Funding Supports Hospitals & Drives Positive Economic Impact

A substantial portion of NIH funding is awarded to hospitals and health systems, including those affiliated with medical schools and teaching programs. These institutions serve as critical centers for patient care, workforce training, and research. NIH grants support laboratory research, clinical trials, staff, and infrastructure that allow discoveries to move efficiently from bench to bedside.

Beyond advancing health outcomes, NIH funding delivers measurable economic benefits to local communities. Recent analyses estimate that every \$1 invested in NIH research generates approximately \$2.56 in economic activity, supporting jobs, local businesses, and regional innovation ecosystems.¹ For hospitals and health systems, NIH funding is therefore both a healthcare and economic driver, sustaining high skilled employment and strengthening local economies.

Congress included NIH funding for fiscal year 2026 in the Health and Human Services appropriations package passed on February 3, 2026. NIH received \$47.2 billion in overall funding for FY 2026, a relatively modest (\$400 million) increase over FY 2025 levels. As the FY 2027 appropriations process begins, sustained and meaningful increases in NIH funding are essential to maintain America's research leadership, accelerate medical breakthroughs, and preserve the economic vitality these investments generate in communities nationwide.

Research Across Medical Education and Physician Training

Research is a core component of medical education and remains essential throughout physician training. For medical students, research participation is critical when applying to residency programs and is increasingly expected across specialties. According to 2024 Match data, MD applicants reported an

1. National Institutes of Health. *Direct Economic Contributions of NIH-Supported Research*.

average of 10 abstracts, presentations, and publications, while DO applicants reported an average of 4.3,² highlighting the competitive role of scholarly activity in residency selection.

As students advance into residency, research continues to play a vital role, particularly for those pursuing fellowship training, where scholarly productivity is often required. Hospitals and training programs supported by NIH funding provide the structured research environments necessary for residents and fellows to contribute to innovation while developing the skills needed to evaluate evidence and advance their fields.

For physician-scientists, including MD-PhD's, research is integral to their professional identity. These physicians connect patient care with scientific discovery, ensuring that research priorities remain clinically relevant and responsive to real-world health needs. Sustained NIH funding is essential to maintaining this pipeline and preserving the United States' global leadership in biomedical research.

The Need for Increased NIH Investment

As Congress begins the FY 2027 appropriations process, an increase in the NIH budget is necessary to keep pace with rising research costs, expanding scientific opportunities, and the growing complexity of modern medicine. Continued investment strengthens hospitals and health systems, supports physician training, drives local economic growth, and advances discoveries that improve patient outcomes nationwide.

CALL TO ACTION:

Ask your Senator or Representative to support an overall increase in the NIH budget in FY 2027 to strengthen medical and scientific research, support hospitals and health systems, and promote continued innovation in patient care.

2. National Resident Matching Program. *Charting Outcomes, 2024 Main Residency Match*.