

Spinal Cord Research Advisory Committee (SCRAC) January 15, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Meeting Logistics

Item	Spinal Cord Research Advisory Committee (SCRAC)
Date	January 15, 2020
Time	9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.
Location	Health and Welfare Building, 625 Forster St, Room 812, Harrisburg PA
Purpose/Focus	Kick-off Spinal Cord Research Advisory Committee meetings
Notetaker	Sarah LaMaster, Court Reporter, Sargent's Court Reporting Services, Inc. and Health Research Office staff, Pennsylvania Department of Health

Attendees

SCRAC Members:

- Jacob G. Chalfin, "Jake," spinal cord injury
- Joel Winer, MD, neurosurgeon, Wellspan Health, York, PA
- Alex Charlton, father of daughter with spinal cord injury
- Benjamin Abramoff, MD, MS, Director of Spinal Cord Injury Services at the Penn Institute for Rehabilitation Medicine and Assistant Professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the University of Pennsylvania.
- Franklin Caldera, D.O., M.B.A. Chief Medical Officer at the University of Pennsylvania Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.

Via telephone:

- Elizabeth Tyler-Kabara, MD, neurosurgeon, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh
- Itzhak Fischer, Ph.D, Professor and Chair of the Department of Neurobiology and Anatomy at Drexel University College of Medicine and co-director of the Spinal Cord Center
- Michael Boninger, MD, Professor and UPMC Endowed Vice Chair for Research in the Department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at the University of Pittsburgh, School of Medicine
- Rory A. Cooper, Ph.D., veteran with a spinal cord injury, Founding Director of the Human Engineering Research Laboratories, VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, Pittsburgh PA; FISA/PVA Distinguished Professor of the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology and Associate Dean for Inclusion, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Pittsburgh

Others Present:

Department of Health (DOH) staff

- Meghna Patel, MHA, Deputy Secretary for Health Innovation
- Rachel Levine, MD, Secretary of Health and Chair of the Committee, Pennsylvania Department of Health
- Penny E. Harris, M.Ed., CAC, LPC, Director, Health Research Office
- Susan Guy, Public Health Program Administrator, Health Research Office
- Chris Albright, Administrative Officer, Health Research Office
- Pamela Brown, Management Technician, Health Research Office
- Emily Roussel, Executive Assistant to Deputy Secretary Meghna Patel
- Keith Fickel, Esq., Senior Counsel, Office of Legal Counsel
- Meaghan Abbott, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs

Others in attendance:

- No public attendees

Agenda

ID	Description	Owner	Time
1	Welcome and Introductions	Meghna Patel, Deputy Secretary for Health Innovation	9:00 a.m. - 9:10 a.m.
2	Opening Remarks	Secretary of Health, Dr. Rachel Levine	9:10 a.m. - 9:15 a.m.
3	Review of Act 77 CURE program and funding status	Meghna Patel and Penny Harris	9:15 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-formula priority process • State FY 2019-2020 and FY 2020-2021 research priority planning 	Meghna Patel and Penny Harris	9:30 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.
5	Summarize next steps	Meghna Patel and Penny Harris	10:15 a.m. - 10:20 a.m.
6	Closing Remarks	SCRAC members and Meghna Patel	10:20 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Discussion

ID	Discussion
1	<p><i>Meghna Patel</i>, Deputy Secretary for Health Innovation, introduced herself. Committee members, and DOH staff introduced themselves. There were no public attendees.</p>
2	<p><i>Secretary Levine</i> provided opening remarks. <i>Secretary Levine</i> highlighted Act 77 of 2001, the Commonwealth Universal Research Enhancement (CURE) program, the Health Research Advisory Committee, Act 126 of 2018 and the Department of Health’s dedication to supporting innovative research that improves quality of life for individuals and families impacted by spinal cord injuries. <i>Secretary Levine</i> expressed valuing the Committee’s guidance, ideas, input and determining research priorities.</p>
3	<p><i>Deputy Secretary Patel</i> provided an overview of the Tobacco Settlement Act/CURE funding, explaining the allocation of research funding into Formula 70%/Non-formula 30%.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formula funds are allocated to institutions that have received National Institutes of Health funding for the past three years. These priorities, since the program’s inception, have remained clinical, health services and/or biomedical research as identified in the statute. • Non-formula research priorities have been identified by the Department in conjunction with the Health Research Advisory Committee. Some of these funds are used to pay for the vendor who assists with the peer and performance reviews required by statute. • \$1M of non-formula funds are set aside for Spinal Cord Research Program and the Department in conjunction with Spinal Cord Research Advisory Committee will identify the research topics. • Funding – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ \$1M per state fiscal year (SFY) ○ With a waiver of two years are combined to be \$2M ○ Grants for a maximum of four years ○ Request for Application (RFA) ○ Grant award currently in other CURE programs are paid in full up front ○ Annual and Final report • The State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2019-2020 estimated amount provided by the Governor’s Budget Office for CURE health research is <u>\$45,774,000</u>. • Over the last three years the non-formula research priorities have been Opioid abuse and overdose crisis, Alzheimer’s disease and the Biology of Aging. • The Health Research Office manages 83 active grants, new grants occur annually, annual and final reports are due for each project – one grant may have multiple projects and peer reviews are required on non-formula research proposals. • Spinal Cord Injury Research Program is a part of Act 77 of 2001 with its own committee. The committee can develop its own research topic focused on spinal cord injury.

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Non-formula priority process and SFY 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 research priority planning –

- 1st document – Health Research Office Non-formula Grants RFA Timeline – this is a graphic visual document to show the process for applications and the steps associated with it.
 - Identification of research priority
 - Program office drafts RFA based on the SFY estimated non-formula funds
 - Internal process RFA review by Procurement and Legal Offices
 - RFA posted to Department of General Services website
 - Applications/proposals due
 - Peer review and ranked by research proposal
 - DOH Final Review Committee
 - Application/proposal negotiation
 - Grant Agreement
- Appendix A – Spinal Cord Research Advisory Committee Charter
- Educational document – Spinal Cord Research Advisory Committee flyer for the website and for use to introduce new members; recommendation to include resource links located in PA, for example, Dr. Cooper’s lab.
- Conflict of Interest document – Spinal Cord Research Advisory Committee Conflict of Interest (COI) Policy. The COI covers if a member has a connection to someone who is involved in obtaining the funds. Being employed at an institution that applies for funds is not a conflict of interest.
- Review of joining SFY – other option is to keep \$1M per fiscal year
 - Funds must be in the account before any grants can be funded, occurs in April/May of SFY
 - 3 to 4 months for grants to be signed and fully executed
 - Waiver permits to carry over funds until the fully executed documents are completed and paid. The waiver cannot be extended beyond one year.
 - With meeting mid-SFY, there is not enough time to execute the RFA, get it posted and complete the entire process.
- Dr. Charlton made a motion to merge two SFY and then have one process. Dr. Boninger provided a second. No opposition or abstentions. The motion passed unanimously.
- Identification of a Chair – suggestion of Counsel for a person who asks for motions, asks for a second, and call for a vote. Recommendation to talk between members, receive nominations then take a collective vote. The committee working to organize itself is outside of the scope of the Sunshine Act so wouldn’t need to be a public meeting or a formal meeting to make those types of organizational decisions. It could be done by telephone and e-mail subsequent to the meeting.
- Priority topic and planning – Invitation to Submit Written Commentary on Spinal Cord Injury Research Priority document draft version.
 - Request for public commentary
 - Submissions are sent on the Committee members
 - Committee members choose topics of interest
 - Submitters are invited to present more on the topic
 - Upon selection of the topic, a Committee member drafts the priority for the RFA to identify what is included and not included within that priority
 - Committee members to identify their focus areas – issues of health services, too narrow; intention of functional, curative treatments; multiple smaller grants

5	<p>Summarize next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting schedule – per law required to meet at least twice a year. Current frequency of meeting is quarterly. • SCRAC will conduct a phone call amongst themselves to identify the chair • Discuss research topic selection process and peer review process
6	<p>Closing remarks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on the success of the program was shared <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Department was asked to provide a Performance Based Budget for 2020 by the Independent Fiscal Office (IFO). We would like to share the successes of this program with the committee. During its existence, the CURE Program has provided \$1 billion in grant funding. Over the past five years, grant projects were associated with three new patents, two licenses for new products and 277 publications that expand current research and advance scientific knowledge on health-related topics. These results build on more than 2,100 publications, 35 patents and 14 licenses for new products generated by the program between 2001 and 2014. • Offer by the Department: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Department of Health 101 overview offering to share about the department itself – what we do, all of the projects being worked on and some priorities for 2020. Committee members expressed interest.