

Society of General Internal Medicine Comment on Modernizing the National Institutes of Health

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To modernize the NIH, the leaders of SGIM are pleased to provide the following comments:

Focus on communities to obtain the correct balance between basic, clinical, and translational science.

We recommend that NIH fund the dissemination of scientific breakthroughs to communities, particularly those most vulnerable with a focus on interdisciplinary research. The ongoing challenges of COVID-19 vaccination uptake provide an important example. Although the development, production, and dissemination of COVID-19 vaccinations represent a remarkable success, vaccination uptake remains low, especially in rural and historically marginalized communities. The medical profession and public health professionals lack the evidence to support interventions to improve vaccination rates—a critical weapon in the fight against pandemics now and in the future.

Ensure salary support for extramural investigators, particularly in the early stage of careers, to ensure retention of high caliber individuals.

We recommend giving priority to career development awards that provide substantial salary support for extramural clinician-investigators in the early stages of their careers. This step is crucial for recruiting and retaining high-caliber individuals in biomedical research. Often, early career researchers have limited support for the time they need to devote to their research activities, which hinders their ability to fully engage in research. By guaranteeing stable salary support for research time, we can attract and retain top talent in extramural clinical research.