NORA news

National Occupational Research Agenda

Volume 2 • Number 1 • Winter 1999

Message from NIOSH

We at NIOSH have been working hard to plan the **NORA Symposium 1999: Partnership for Research**. I hope you will mark May 14, 1999 on your calendar and plan to attend this important meeting. More details about the Symposium can be found in the sidebar article at right. In addition to presentations from invited dignitaries, selected NORA teams and others involved in implementing the Agenda, the first winner of the NORA partnership award will be announced. This award recognizes unique collaboration and excellence in partnership in a NORA priority area. The partnership award will be presented at each future NORA Symposium.

The NORA grant cycle for FY 1999 is underway. See the article on page 2 for a detailed description of the NORA grants process and page 5 for information on the FY 1999 NORA RFA.

I am happy to report that the President's budget for FY 2000 includes $212 million for NIOSH. This includes an increase of $12 million (six percent) over FY 1999 for NORA to support both intramural and extramural research and related activities. While the House and Senate still need to consider the NIOSH budget, we are off to a good start for FY 2000.



Linda Rosenstock, MD, MPH
Director

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
NIOSH

NORA Symposium 1999: Partnership for Research

It is clear that the key to NORA implementation is partnership. The **NORA Symposium 1999: Partnership for Research** will celebrate NORA partnership successes to date and discuss future opportunities for collaboration.

The Symposium will be held on May 14, 1999 at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The agenda will include perspectives from invited dignitaries, real-world accounts from NORA partners and the accomplishments of selected NORA Teams.

Most of the NORA Teams plan to take advantage of the Symposium as an opportunity to hold team meetings on Thursday, May 13, 1999. The meetings will be held at George Washington University (GWU) in the Government Hall located at 710 21st St., NW and Monroe Hall located at 2115 G St., NW. Meeting times are scheduled between 8:00 am and 6:00 p.m.

For more information on the NORA Symposium call Retina Holmes at 202/401-3705 or e-mail her at rnh3@cdc.gov . Updated information will also be posted on the NORA site on the NIOSH webpage at http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/norahmpg.html under NORA Symposium. ■

CONTENTS

NIOSH GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS	2	RFA FOR FY 99 GRANTS	5
IOM REPORT	3	STRESS AT WORK	5
NORA MEETING SUMMARIES	3	NORA AT WORK IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR	5
PARTNER PERSPECTIVE	4	UPCOMING EVENTS	6
ON-LINE WITH THE MIXED EXPOSURE TEAM	4		

NIOSH Grant Application Process

In fiscal year (FY) 99, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health plans to expand funding for research in National Occupational Research Agenda priority areas for the second year in a row, building upon the enthusiastic response from 1998. Funds will be available for awards under both a Program Announcement (PA) and a Request for Applications (RFA) targeted at specific NORA topics (see page 5). A number of investigators have contacted NIOSH with questions about the grant review process— specifically, what happens to an application once it arrives in Washington? This article briefly discusses the review process for grant applications and how awards are made.

Program Announcement (PA) and Request for Applications (RFA)

NIOSH published its PA for FY 1999 (PAS-99-053) in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Guide to Grants and Contracts, calling for research on topics selected by the investigator, as long as they pertain to occupational safety and health. The PA emphasizes research in the 21 NORA priority areas; however, this does not preclude investigators from submitting innovative proposals on other areas of occupational safety and health. Applications may be submitted under the PA three times a year, with receipt deadlines on February 1, June 1, and October 1 each year, and awards made three times a year.

An RFA, on the other hand, is intended to stimulate research on more selected topics than the PA. For example, during FY 1998, NIOSH and its partners selected 11 of the NORA priorities for the NORA RFA. RFA's have only one receipt date which is announced at the time it is published in the NIH guide. Proposals in response to the RFA are reviewed separately from those received under the PA; however, the process is similar.

The Peer Review Process

Investigators interested in competing for funds develop proposals to meet the criteria established in the PA or RFA. Proposals responding to either type of announcement are sent to the Center for Scientific Review (CSR) in NIH. CSR examines incoming proposals for completeness and assigns them to a study section dedicated to reviewing applications by topic. The Safety and Occupational Health (SOH) study section reviews applications that come to NIOSH, and is comprised of individuals recognized for their expertise in various areas of occupational safety and health.

Each study section has a Scientific Review Administrator (SRA) with responsibilities for assisting with the review process. Upon receipt of proposals, the SRA assigns each one to a set of peer reviewers on the study section, or if necessary, from a larger committee set up specifically to review grants. During this peer review, each proposal is reviewed in depth by two reviewers (called primary and secondary) who evaluate its scientific merit and adherence to the criteria laid out in the announcement. Their initial scientific merit scores are shared with the rest of the study section. Those that are deemed acceptable are assigned a score between 500 and 100, with 500 being the lowest, and 100 being a perfect score. Proposals initially scoring higher than 300 are generally not discussed in detail by the study section. Those applicants with better scores (100300) are discussed in more detail, then scored individually by each voting member of the study section. The individual scores are averaged together, resulting in the "priority score". Only applications with priority scores are eligible for the next phase of the review process.

After the peer reviews are completed, the SRA writes summary statements, and sends these and the priority scores to the potential funding agencies (e.g. NIOSH or other co-sponsors). The agencies mail summary statements to applicants. Applications assigned to NIOSH then undergo secondary, or programmatic review. During this stage, NIOSH senior staff review applications and judge the magnitude of the hazard to be studied, the impact that the project can have on solving the problem, and relevance to the agency mission.

RFA's are sometimes handled slightly differently, since, depending on the subject and magnitude of the RFA, they can elicit a large number of applications that need to be reviewed fairly and expeditiously. For example, during the FY 1998 NORA RFA review, 240 proposals needed to be reviewed. To do so, the peer review process was broken down into priority area-specific panels that consisted of SOH members and other experts.

Funding Decisions

The results of the peer and programmatic reviews are evaluated in the context of existing grants and available funds, and then forwarded as a package to the NIOSH Director for final funding decisions. The predominant factor in funding decisions is the peer review results; however, the programmatic rating and balance of awards across interest areas also influence the decision. NIOSH funds all of the high-scoring grants that it can within its fiscal year budget.

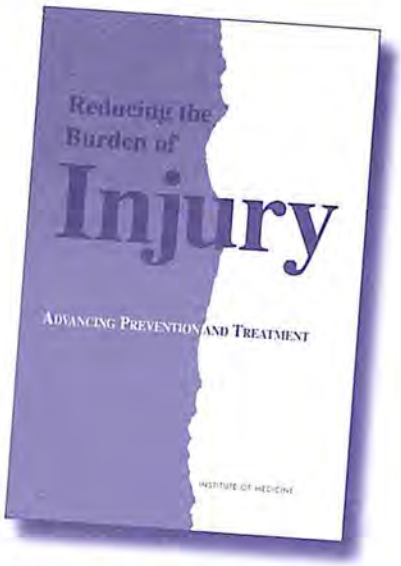
Unfunded Proposals

Applications that are not funded at the end of the review process are kept on file for 12 months, and reconsidered for funding in future rounds. Although each proposal is evaluated on its own merits and not compared with any other proposal, the quality of the applications in occupational safety and health is high, resulting in the rejection of many innovative and promising proposals. However, revised proposals are always welcome, and some compete very well in the following funding cycle.

Additional Information

Additional information on the funding process may be obtained by visiting the NIOSH website at http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html. ■

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
NIOSH



IOM Report

The Institute of Medicine report "Reducing the Burden of Injury: Advancing Prevention and Treatment" includes several recommendations concerning NORA and the NORA Traumatic Injury Team:

- The committee applauds NIOSH in its paradigmatic approach to research priority setting through NORA. The contemporary scientific community values planning as a tool for setting broad priorities and integrating diverse research programs."
- NCIPC might wish to consider developing a priority-setting process similar to the awardwinning one employed by NIOSH–the National Occupational Research Agenda. Theinclusion of federal research partners was one of the hallmarks of NORA."
- The committee recommends that NIOSH, working incollaboration with other federal partners, implement the NORA research priorities for traumatic and other injury-related occupational injuries, and give higher priority to injury research."
- Traumatic injury research priorities recently developed by themulti-disciplinary NORA team assigned to this topic also warrant special consideration by Congress."

To order a copy of the report call the National Academy Press at 1-800-624-6242 or visit their web page at www.nap.edu. ■

NORA Meeting Summaries



Derm Meetings

On December 10 and 11, 1998, the NORA Allergic and Irritant Dermatitis (AID) Team held a team meeting at the NIOSH facilities in Morgantown, West Virginia in conjunction with the second annual meeting of the NIOSH Derm Interest Group (DIG). This provided both external and NIOSH AID team members a setting to continue work on research priorities in AID, to tour the new NIOSH labs and facilities, and to meet NIOSH staff who are conducting research or have an interest in derm activities. DIG was established by NIOSH staff in 1997 and currently has 58 members representing all NIOSH divisions. The group's first meeting was held in Morgantown in February 1998. The goal of DIG is to provide a forum for exchange of ideas on derm issues and to increase research collaboration within the NIOSH community.

The joint DIG/AID meeting was well attended and included speakers from both the NORA team and NIOSH staff. Topics of the meeting included an overview of NORA and a presentation of the draft research priorities, an overview of the NIOSH Derm Policy Working Group and a discussion of the skin notation, reports on clinical and experimental derm topics, and updates on current research projects. Both NORA team members and NIOSH DIG members found the meeting to be successful.

Health Services Research Meeting

On Sept 15 and 16, 1998, NORA Health Services Research team members participated in a conference jointly held in Washington DC. with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Workers' Compensation Health Initiative. This Technical Assistance Meeting brought together health services research grantees funded by NIOSH or the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in order to allow them to share experiences and insights in the conduct of occupational health services research. Participants discussed issues in evaluating costs of occupational injuries or illnesses, research measuring health and other non-economic outcomes, practical challenges in survey design and administration, identifying appropriate study and comparison groups in health services research, statistical and analytical issues, and ways that health services research impacts policy. A summary paper of the conference will be submitted for publication. ■

Partner Perspective

From:
Allergic & Irritant Dermatitis Team (AID) Co-Team Leaders



Boris Lushniak
(NIOSH)



G. Frank Gerberick
(Procter & Gamble)

NORA seems to be working! This viewpoint comes from the experiences we've had within our group—the Allergic & Irritant Dermatitis Team (AID). Our team has had much success in collaborating with outside partners and generating interest in allergic and irritant dermatitis. To date, AID Team accomplishments include—organizing and co-sponsoring meetings within the occupational safety and health and dermatological community; enhancing derm-related activities through both intra-and extra-mural research; and developing research priorities in the following areas: basic biomedical sciences; clinical, epidemiology, and surveillance; and exposure, risk assessment, and prevention.

These success are due to the hard work of our team members. The team membership is varied, but one thing that is common among all members is the high level of expertise they bring to the table. The team is composed of seven scientists from NIOSH and seven external partners representing the American Nurses Association, Department of Energy/Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, University of Cincinnati, University of Oregon, University of Washington, and the Procter & Gamble Company. Areas of expertise include dermatology, allergy, immunology, industrial hygiene, nursing, safety, epidemiology, and toxicology.

The plans of the AID Team can be divided into identifying research priorities; assisting in guiding the parameters for soliciting investigator-initiated research; and outreach. In defining research priorities, the AID Team hopes to evaluate implementation options, identify potential partners, solicit feedback on previous activities, and measure accomplishments. To further engage the occupational safety and health community and the ***'derm'*** community, the AID Team will continue to organize and co-sponsor meetings and events. These activities will help us realize the team's mission—To develop a broad-based, active, and lasting group whose interest is in assessing research priorities and needs in AID, catalyzing research, and assessing progress towards achieving these priorities and needs. ■



On-Line With the Mixed Exposure Team

The Mixed Exposure Team is the first to go interactive and on-line. The team has established a listserver and a presence on the NIOSH Home Page. The web address for the mixed exposure pages is: **http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/mixed.html**.

The Listserver has been established on the CDC network. To subscribe to the list, send an email message to the List Server's address (Listserv@listserv.cdc.gov) with the following oneline message in the body of the e-mail:
SUBSCRIBE NORA-MIXED-EXPOSURES firstname lastname

You will receive a message in reply welcoming you to the list. ■

NIOSH Announces RFA FOR FY 1999 Grants Under NORA

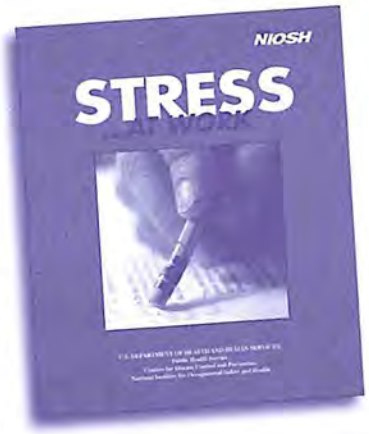
On March 4, 1999, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) announced a request for grant applications for fiscal year 1999 for research related to several specific priority areas under the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA). NIOSH and partners from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) co-sponsored the RFA and anticipate awarding $7.5 million in grants under this solicitation.

The request for applications (RFA), invites proposals for research related to the specific areas of:

- Intervention effectiveness research: evaluation of safety and health interventions to protect workers from job-related injuries and illnesses. Proposals can be in any industry sector, but NIOSH will give special consideration to projects in agriculture, construction, the service industry (particularly health care), and mining.
- Fertility and pregnancy abnormalities associated with occupational exposures.
- Occupational hearing loss: prevention and intervention, including noise control.
- Methodologies for assessing exposures to hazardous biological, chemical, and physical agents, including assessment of complex mixtures.
- Methodologies for injury and illness surveillance in the workplace.
- The aging workforce as a special population at risk of job-related injuries and illnesses.
- Asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
- Issues in the organization of work relating to demanding work schedules, sleep disorders, and/or the risk of occupational illness and injury.

The RFA has been published in the "NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts" and is available on NIOSH's home page on the World Wide Web, http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html, under "Extramural Program." ■

Stress at Work



NIOSH has released an educational document, ***Stress at Work***, which highlights current knowledge about the causes of stress at work and outlines step that can be taken to prevent job stress. While the document is not a product of the Organization of Work team, it is relevant to the team's work since it addresses many safety and health issues related to the way work is structured and managed. The document is available electronically at http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/atwork.html. Hard copies can be obtained by calling 1-800-35NIOSH and referencing DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 99-101. ■

NORA at Work in the Private Sector

In the first example of leveraging private sector funds for NORA research, NORA grantee Bradley Evanoff, M.D. of Washington University School of medicine and Barnes-Jewish Hospital, St. Louis, Missouri, has secured funding from the Academic Medicine and Managed Health Care Forum to enhance his NORA-funded musculoskeletal disorders project. The funds from the Forum (founded by Aetna U.S. Healthcare) will allow for additional data collection and analysis resulting in a richer study than originally conceptualized with the NORA funding. Dr. Evanoff's three year study will examine the use of ergonomic interventions and case management to reduce the length of disability following an ergonomic injury. Dr. Evanoff's $249,056 award was part of the $5.4 million awarded through the NORA research grants in October 1998 — the single largest infusion of funding ever by the federal government for extramural occupational health and safety research. ■

NORA Upcoming Events

March

March 8

Developing a National Occupational Research Agenda for Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders

Location: Houston Marriott Westside, Houston, Texas

Sponsors: NORA Musculoskeletal Disorders Team/ NIOSH

Contact: Thomas Waters, Ph.D. 513/533-8147

March 9-11

Applied Ergonomics 2nd Annual Conference

Location: Houston Marriott Westside, Houston, Texas

Co-Sponsors: Institute of Industrial Engineers, NIOSH, OSHA

Contact: 800-494-0460 (770-449-0460) www.iienet.org/conted/ergoconf.htm

March 11-13

Work, Stress and Health 1999: Organization of Work in a Global Economy

Location: Hyatt Regency Baltimore on the Inner Harbor, Baltimore, Maryland

Sponsors: American Psychological Association and NIOSH

Contact: Wes Baker, APA Conference Coordinator, 202/336-6033 or http://www.apa.org/pi/wpo/niosh.html

April

April 26

American Thoracic Society International Conference "The National Occupational Research Agenda in 1999: Highlights from NIOSH and Collaborative Occupational Lung Disease Research" - Lunchtime program

Location: San Diego, California

Contact: Greg Wagner, NIOSH 304/285-5749

May

May 14

NORA Symposium 1999: Partnership for Research

Location: National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC

Sponsor: NIOSH

Contact: Retina Holmes, NIOSH 202/401-0721

May 21-22

First Meeting of the Experimental Contact Dermatitis Research Group

Location: Omni Netherland Plaza Hotel, Cincinnati, OH

Sponsors: NORA Allergic and Irritant Dermatitis Team/ NIOSH, Skin Disease Research Centers at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Case Western Reserve University/ University Hospitals of Cleveland, The Proctor & Gamble Company

Contact Persons: G. Frank Gerberick, Ph.D. (513) 627-2909 (The Proctor & Gamble Company)
Michael Luster, Ph.D. (304) 285-5940 (NIOSH)

June

June 13-15

Functional, Economic, and Social Outcomes of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses: Integrating Social, Economic, and Health Services Research

Location: Marriott Tech Center, Denver, Colorado

Sponsors: NIOSH

Contact: Elyce Biddle at (304) 285-6015 or email at egb6@cdc.gov.

June 14

Panel: Safety Research Activities: NIOSH's NORA Program and ASSE Foundation Initiatives at the American Society of Safety Engineers Professional Development Conference and Exposition

Location: Hyatt Regency Inner Harbor, Baltimore, Maryland

Sponsors: American Society of Safety Engineers

Contact: ASSE Conference Registrar, (847) 699-2929

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

NIOSH

Delivering on the Nation's promise: Safety and Health at work for all people through research and prevention

For more information on NORA contact NIOSH at: 1-800-35-NIOSH (1-800-356-4674) or visit the NIOSH Homepage at: http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/norahmpg.html