

January 30, 2015

Nora D. Volkow, M.D.,
Director
National Institute on Drug Abuse
Office of Science Policy and Communications, Public Information and Liaison Branch
6001 Executive Boulevard
Room 5213, MSC 9561
Bethesda, Maryland 20892-9561

RE: NOT-DA-15-005 – Request for Information (RFI): FY2016-2020 Strategic Plan for the National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health

Dear Dr. Dr. Volkow:

On behalf of the Society for Women's Health Research (SWHR®), we are writing in response to the request for input on the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Strategic Plan (NOT-DA-15-005). SWHR has consistently worked to make sure all of Institutes at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are aware of the impact of biological sex and gender differences in the research work they support.

SWHR is a non-profit organization, based in Washington D.C. that is widely considered to be a thought leader in promoting research on biological differences in disease. We are dedicated to transforming women's health through science, advocacy, and education and bring attention to the growing list of diseases and conditions that uniquely affect women. Due to SWHR's past efforts, women are now routinely included in most major medical research studies and scientists are considering biological sex as a fundamental variable in their research.

We were pleased to see that the NIDA draft strategic plan priorities highlighted and put appropriate emphasis on the promotion of research that considers the impact of sex and gender on drug abuse and addiction and the need to increase knowledge of biological, behavioral, environmental, and developmental factors that increase the risk in and resilience for drug abuse and addiction. For years, NIDA has been a leader in furthering the study of sex and gender differences research and urging the translation of that research into clinical practice. We hope that by NIDA's emphasis on increasing the inclusion of sex and gender differences as crucial biological variables in all of their research portfolios, the adoption of these issues among other Institutes and researchers will be expedited.

We are also pleased to see that NIDA is expanding its focus to look at the role of addiction and drug abuse across the lifespan and in underrepresented populations. SWHR would suggest that NIDA require in its grants and publications, analysis by demographic subgroups (sex, gender, race, age, and ethnicity) as appropriate, to be able to determine appropriate treatments for all individuals at various stages of the lifespan.



Additionally, SWHR supports a reinvigorated focus on increasing the public health impact of NIDA's research and programs. SWHR has a unique outreach to a wide variety of stakeholders from all aspects of the medical research and healthcare community. We stand ready to serve as a strategic partner with the Institute in any way to increase NIDA's priority initiatives and facilitate the translation and dissemination of this important research into practice.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to provide input to NIDA as it drafts its strategic plan. We hope that you will take our comments into consideration as you work towards producing a final plan. Should you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us at 202.496.5003 or via email at Leslie@swhr.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leslie Ritter".

Leslie Ritter, MA
Director of Government Affairs

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monica Mallampalli".

Monica Mallampalli, PhD
Director of Scientific Programs