

SPINAL CORD INJURY RESEARCH BOARD

Regular Business Meeting

March 22, 2024

10:00 am to 1:00 pm

ADOPTED

Location

NYS DOH, Wadsworth Center, Biggs Laboratory, Sturman Conference Room, Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY

NYS DOH, Metropolitan Area Regional Office, Conference Room 4A-B, 90 Church Street, New York, NY

9 Corwin Place, Lake Katrine, NY

1270 Belmont Avenue, Schenectady, NY

Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, University of Buffalo, 955 Main Street Room 3254, Buffalo, NY

SCIRB Members Present

Adam B. Stein, M.D., Chair

April B. Coughlin, Ph.D.

Jessica K. Daigle, M.A., O.T.R./L

Bernice Grafstein, Ph.D., D.Sc.

Keith Gurgui

Avinash Mohan, M.D.

Lorne Mendell, Ph.D.

Rachel Santiago, M.D.

Fraser J. Sim, Ph.D.

Lauren A. Varriale, M.S., O.T.R./L

NYS DOH Staff Present

Alana Buscher, Executive Secretary

Farah M. O'Brien

David Googins

Jim Magenis

Ramana Pfeiffer

Alexa Nagy

Members of the Public

N/A

Call to Order and Opening Remarks of the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 am with a welcome by Chair, Adam B. Stein, M.D.

Board Membership Updates

Dr. Stein said a few words in honor of Brooke Ellison, former SCIRB member and advocate for the NYS Spinal Cord Injury Program, who passed away on February 4 of this year. He also recognized her work on the New York Empire State Stem Cell Board (ESSCB). Dr. Mendell thoughtfully recognized Brooke for her work and dedication to SCIRB, the spinal cord injury community and the ESSCB.

Dr. Stein welcomed the newest SCIRB member, Dr. Avinash Mohan, who introduced himself to the Board. Board members and DOH staff introduced themselves.

Dr. Stein advised that there were three (3) vacant seats on the SCIRB, with one (1) of those seats to be filled by Governor Kathy Hochul and two (2) to be filled by Speaker of the Assembly Carl Heastie.

Board Member Recruitment

Dr. Stein noted that a candidate to fill the governor's vacancy has been moved forward.

Dr. Stein said that it is extremely important to fill the remaining vacancies with new experts and advocates as quickly as possible so the SCIRB can continue its mission to find a cure for spinal cord injuries and approve applications of merit for awards.

Dr. Stein asked that current SCIRB members forward any recommendations of potential SCIRB members to Department of Health staff, or to the legislative leadership that has vacancies to fill.

Consideration of September 20, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Dr. Stein asked the SCIRB to consider Exhibit 1, the minutes from the September 22, 2023 meeting. Dr. Stein reminded the Board that Dr. Mohan must abstain from voting on the previous minutes as he was not a member at the time of the meeting.

ACTION

Dr. Grafstein made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Lorne Mendell, Ph.D. seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the minutes were approved (9-0).

Public Comment

No members of the public provided a written statement and there was no public comment.

ACTION

Dr. Mendel moved to adjourn into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing the applications received in response to SCIRB Translational Round 5. Dr. Grafstein seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was unanimously approved (10-0).

After discussion, the SCIRB reconvened in Public Session.

SCIRB Recommends TRP (Round 5) applications

Dr. Stein began the process of considering the applications in response to the TRP (Round 5) RFA. Ms. Buscher announced the application number, organization, and principal investigator. A listing of the SCIRB's recommendations is provided on page 5.

In summary, the SCIRB recommended no applications for funding using the peer review results as the basis for the decision.

ACTION

Dr. Mendell made a motion to vote on one (1) TRP application (DOH01-TRANS5-2024-00006) submitted by Sunil K. Agrawal, Ph.D. at the Trustees of Columbia University. Dr. Grafstein seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was denied (1-9).

ACTION

Dr. Mendell made a motion to vote on one (1) TRP application (DOH01-TRANS5-2024-00004) submitted by Christopher Cardozo, M.D. at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center. Dr. Daigle seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was denied (0-10).

Future RFA: Individual Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowships in Spinal Cord Injury Research (Round 6)

ACTION

Dr. Grafstein made a motion to approve a Fellowships (Round 6) RFA for release in 2024 with \$1.5 million available. Dr. Mendell seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was unanimously approved (10-0).

Future RFA: Projects to Accelerate Research Translation (PART) and Innovative, Developmental or Exploratory Activities in Spinal Cord Injury (Round 7)

ACTION

Ms. Daigle made a motion to approve a PART & IDEA (Round 7) RFA for release in 2024 with approximately \$5 million available. Ms. Varriale seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was unanimously approved (10-0).

Future Institutional Support (Round 8) Solicitation of Interest:

ACTION

Ms. Daigle made a motion to approve a future Institutional Support (Round 8) Solicitation of Interest for release in 2024-25 with approximately \$4.2 million available. Ms. Varriale seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was unanimously approved (10-0).

Future RFA: Translational Research Projects (TRP) in Spinal Cord Injury (Round 6)

ACTION

Dr. Grafstein made a motion to approve a TRP (Round 6) RFA for release in 2024-25 with approximately \$8 million available. Ms. Daigle seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was unanimously approved (10-0).

Consideration of SCIRB Reports

The SCIRB considered the draft 2022-2023 SCIRB report in their meeting materials. Ms. Buscher noted that the final reports will be sent to the Commissioner of Health for approval, and then the reports will be provided to the Governor and Legislative leaders.

ACTION

Ms. Daigle made a motion to approve the draft 2022-2023 SCIRB Report as presented. Ms. Varriale seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was unanimously approved (10-0).

Vote on SCIRB Bylaw Amendment to be homogenous with Open Meetings Law and to include the newly adopted provisions found within Section 103-a(c).

ACTION

Ms. Daigle made a motion to approve the SCIRB Bylaw Amendment. Ms. Varriale seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was unanimously approved (10-0).

DOH Program Update

Ms. Buscher provided an update on the status of other program activities and previously awarded contracts:

- The DOH peer review contract with the American Institute for Biological Sciences (AIBS) continues and ends in December 2024, an extension will be requested for up to one (1) year, after which bids will be accepted for a new peer review contract,
- One (1) PART and seven (7) of the eight (8) IDEA (Round 4) contracts began in November 2021 and ended in October 2023 (IDEA) or will end in October 2024 (PART). One (1) of the eight (8) IDEA (Round 4) awardees from the Research Foundation of SUNY Albany, Dr. Ben Szaro, declined his award and announced his retirement,
- Four (4) PART and five (5) of the nine (9) IDEA (Round 5) contracts began October 2022 and will end September 2024 (IDEA) or September 2025 (PART),
- Four (4) PART and four (4) IDEA (Round 6) contracts began October 2023 and will end September 2025 (IDEA) or September 2026 (PART),
- Two (2) TRP (Round 4) contracts began in October 2022 and will end in September 2027,
- Eight (8) Predoc and Postdoc Fellowships (Round 5) began in September 2023 and will end in August 2025,
- Thirteen (13) Institutional Support (Round 7) contracts began in July 2023 and will end in June 2028

Future Meeting & Adjournment

At its next meeting, fall 2024, the SCIRB will consider choosing consistent meeting dates. Dr. Stein thanked members of the SCIRB and DOH staff for attending. The business meeting was adjourned at 11:40 am

Translational Research Projects (TRP) in Spinal Cord Injury (Round 5)

No awards were recommended.

Projects are five (5) years.

Organization	Research Category	Project Title	PI	Recommended Funding	Votes (Y-N)
The Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York	Translational	Improving Seated Postural Control in People with Spinal Cord Injury with a Robotic Trunk Support Trainer (TruST)	Sunil K. Agrawal, Ph.D.	N/A	1-9
Bronx Veterans Medical Research Foundation	Translational	Development of Intravenous Analogs of a Connexin Hemichannel Blocker	Christopher P. Cardoza, M.D. and Carlos A. Toro, Ph.D.	N/A	0-10