

## **Spinal Cord Injury Research Board**

Regular Business Meeting

**November 24, 2014**

9:00 AM to 12:00 PM

MINUTES

### **Location**

**Albany:** NYS DOH David Axelrod Institute, 120 New Scotland Ave, Auditorium

### **Board Members Present**

David A. Carmel  
Donald Faber, PhD  
Keith Gurgui  
Nancy A. Lieberman  
Lorne Mendell, PhD  
Gary Paige, MD, PhD  
Jonathan R. Wolpaw, MD  
Thomas N. Bryce, MD

### **DOH Staff Present**

Ellen Anderson  
Terry Ascienzo  
Bonnie Brautigam  
Victoria Derbyshire, PhD  
Jeannine Tusch  
Carlene Van Patten  
Diana Yang, JD

### **Board Members Absent**

Jeffrey Ehmann  
Michael Goldberg, MD  
Mark Menniti Stecker, MD, PhD  
Adam Stein, MD  
Paul Richter

### **Call to Order and Opening Remarks of the Chair**

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.m. with a welcome by Chair, Lorne Mendell, PhD. Spinal Cord Injury Research Board (SCIRB) members introduced themselves. New member Thomas N. Bryce, M.D. was introduced and welcomed.

### **Consideration of October 1, 2014 Meeting Minutes**

Dr. Mendell asked the SCIRB to consider Exhibit 1, the minutes from the October 1, 2014 meeting. No changes were suggested and no comments were offered.

### **ACTION**

Gary Paige, MD, PhD made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Donald Faber, PhD seconded. A roll call vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved (7-0), excluding a vote from Dr. Bryce.

### **Consideration of October 24, 2014 Meeting Minutes**

Dr. Mendell asked the SCIRB to consider Exhibit 2, the minutes from the October 24, 2014 meeting. Nancy A. Lieberman noted that she included representatives from the New York State Division of Budget (DOB) in her resolution. She asked staff to verify and correct the minutes, if necessary. She noted that the goal of the resolution was to streamline the procurement processes and to discuss with

whomever was necessary to accomplish that. [Subsequent notation: Staff confirmed that the final motion did not include DOB]

### **ACTION**

Dr. Faber made a motion to approve the minutes. Dr. Paige seconded. A roll call vote was taken and Dr. Mendell stated the motion was unanimously approved (7-0) subject to a possible correction to the resolution.

### **Introduction of Office of the State Comptroller (OSC) and Department of Health (DOH) Representatives (OSC Invited) and Discussion of SCIRB Resolution of 10/24/14 Meeting**

Ellen Anderson, Deputy Director of Office of Public Health, DOH; Victoria Derbyshire, PhD, Deputy Director, Wadsworth Center, DOH; and Carlene VanPatten, Associate Director of Administration, Wadsworth Center, DOH were present to discuss a plan to spend the remaining funds in fiscal year (FY) 2014-15 and FY 2015-16.

Ms. Anderson said that while OSC was unable to attend, they are committed to assisting the DOH and SCIRB with their recommended transactions.

### **Program Update**

Ms. Brautigam announced the 13 institutional support contracts have been sent to the institutions. She noted that peer review services are expected to be in place by January 1, 2015, six months prior to the initial anticipated start date. She anticipated that the SCIRB would reconvene in late summer or early fall to make award recommendations allowing contracts to start by January 1, 2016. She explained the peer review and contract initiation processes and historical timelines. Members expressed concerns with these timelines. Ms. Anderson said the DOH is committed to getting the funds in the hands of the researchers and will work with the peer review contractor to establish a review panel as early as possible.

The SCIRB discussed Ms. Brautigam's suggestion of a standing review panel as one way to speed up the time to contract execution. Ms. Brautigam clarified that the DOH does not rank applications and that the SCIRB would need to review the panel's scores when making their recommendations for award.

### **ACTION**

David A. Carmel made a motion that the DOH should work with the peer review contractor to get a peer review panel for the life of the contract (5 years) to review the applications and bring in outside expertise as they see fit. The explicit goal is to reduce the time from application submission to SCIRB recommendations to three months. Dr. Paige seconded. A roll call vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved (8-0).

Ms. Anderson offered that the DOH will follow up with the SCIRB regarding when the contracts will start and assured the SCIRB the goal is to have contracts start as early as possible to allow the institutions to spend funds for the longest possible period during the fiscal year.

Ms. Brautigam noted that the Grants Gateway is designed to shorten the time from application to distribution of funds. At the SCIRB's request, she will inform them of institutions that have not registered in the Grants Gateway.

Mr. Carmel asked about the status of the 2014-15 Institutional Support contracts for the institutions. Ms. Anderson stated that once the awards are approved by the Commissioner of Health, DOH can issue award letters. Ms. Anderson noted that all contracts must have the same start date.

Mr. Carmel asked for an update of the peer review contract status and whether DOH could update the SCIRB when the award letter is sent. Ms. Anderson agreed to update the SCIRB.

Dr. Mendell summarized that if things proceed as recommended, applications will be peer reviewed by the beginning of the summer, the SCIRB will meet in June and the DOH will get contracts executed as quickly as possible.

Ms. Anderson noted the Department will work to issue the Collaborations to Accelerate Research Translation (CART)/Innovative, Developmental or Exploratory Activities (IDEA) Request for Applications (RFA) in mid-December.

#### **DOH Proposal for Distribution of Remaining FY 2014-15**

Dr. Mendell moved the discussion to the plan to disburse remaining FY 2014-15 funds by March 31, 2015. He referenced the first handout, noting that a fixed amount of \$212,636 would be distributed to each eligible organization. Ms. Brautigam explained that organizations would be eligible based on the following criterion:

- If they received SCIRB or NIH funds available to them since FY 2010
- If they submit at least one current notice of funding award (or renewal) and the corresponding abstract from a funded peer-reviewed research project.

Victoria Derbyshire, PhD announced that the DOH made phone calls to the 14 eligible organization, each of which was very interested and stated they would be able to spend awarded funds on spinal cord injury research in an amount as high as \$250,000 no later than March 31, 2015. She noted that eligible use of the funds includes salary and other customary expenses to support spinal cord injury research efforts.

Mr. Carmel asked the DOH to confirm the expected distribution of SCIRB funds in FY 2014-15. Terry Ascienzo confirmed the available funding was \$7.81 million, not \$7.9 million as previously reported. She explained \$7 million this year that was appropriated and that approximately \$850,000 unspent during the previous FY was made available. The SCIRB expressed appreciation of this update and applauded the DOH for its efforts. Ms. Anderson clarified that these organizations need to expend and voucher by March 31, 2015. Ms. Lieberman asked if un-vouchered funds could be prorated evenly between the institutions that were able to spend this money. Ms. Anderson noted the timeframe makes this challenging and agreed to inquire.

#### **ACTION**

Ms. Lieberman offered the following resolution:

The proposal made to the SCIRB relating to distribution of the remaining 2014-2015 funds for customary uses for research (including but not limited to salaries, publications, supplies, travel, materials, fringe benefits, indirect costs, equipment and renovations) shall be approved provided that to the extent monies are not able to be spent by one of the 14 institutions, the remaining amount of the \$2.97 million shall be equally distributed, if possible, to the parties who were able to spend the full allotment that they received on a prorated basis. Keith Gurgui seconded. A roll call vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved (8-0).

Ms. Brautigam said that next, DOH will seek approval of this plan; the organizations will need to submit work plans and budgets. Upon request of the SCIRB, she agreed to distribute the names of the organizations to receive funding after the meeting.

### **FY 2015-16 Funding**

Referring to the second handout, Ms. Brautigam introduced the draft plan to disburse FY 2015-16 spinal cord injury research funds. Ms. Anderson explained in order to deal with any funding that accumulates during the first year application process, a one-time funding opportunity can be added to an RFA so that the Year 1 expenditures are higher and include opportunities for the organizations to do one time activities. She further explained the one time award cannot annualize over the life of the contract because the dollar amount would exceed the amount available to the program. She said the DOH has a proposal based on this concept for the CART and IDEA RFA. Ms. Brautigam said this proposal would change the CART and IDEA RFA previously approved by the SCIRB. Ms. Anderson clarified that organizations would begin receiving FY 2015-16 funds in the last quarter of 2015.

Ms. Lieberman interjected that the statute requires \$8.5 million be spent on spinal cord injury research. She said the SCIRB should be funded by the statute that created it and would like to have this discussion on the agenda for the next meeting.

### **ACTION**

Ms. Lieberman offered the following resolution:

The SCIRB meetings in the upcoming year, include a detailed discussion whereby the staff presents to the SCIRB the language in the legislative history as well as the complete statute (not just the words of “up to \$8.5 million”) on the amount of monies that the legislators intended to have been spent, along with a plan for presenting it in future legislation so that the funding shall occur in future fiscal years. Mr. Gurgui seconded and stated that the posture of the SCIRB should be that it follows the law. A roll call vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved (8-0).

Returning to the DOH proposal for increased Year 1 funding for the CART/IDEA RFA, Ms. Brautigam explained the proposed Year 1 funding for a CART award would be \$430,000; whereas Year 2 and Year 3 would be \$330,000. She noted that additional funding for Year 1 of CART and IDEA awards at the level proposed would increase the FY 2015-16 expenditures by \$850,500. She noted that each CART would have to claim \$182,500 and each IDEA would have to claim \$95,000 in the first quarter of the respective contracts. She stated that \$3.7 million of FY 2015-16 funds still needs to be discussed.

In order to issue the RFA quickly, Ms. Anderson offered that the SCIRB may want to approve one-time proposals and the language that DOH reserves the right to make these additional awards. She

explained the peer reviewers could look at the applicant's budgets and score them separately so the SCIRB can make a decision about distributing additional money if it's available after the eligible base CART/IDEA awards are made.

**ACTION**

Mr. Gurgui moved to include in the CART/IDEA RFA one-time expenditures for CARTS of \$250K and IDEA of \$100K in the first year. Dr. Faber seconded.

Further discussion resulted in a restatement of the motion by Dr. Mendell to increase the CART award by \$250,000 and the IDEA award by \$100,000 for the first year with the idea that these be considered as integral grants with any adjustments to be made according to the needs of the program either in response to what the reviewers say or what SCIRB recommends. A roll call vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved (8-0).

The entire agenda was completed and the meeting ended at 12:11 pm.