

October 17, 2005

Elias Zerhouni, M.D.
Director
National Institutes of Health
One Center Drive
Suite 126 – MSC 0148
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Dr. Zerhouni:

The undersigned nonprofit medical and scientific societies that publish journals are long-time supporters of NIH and have worked closely with NIH to see that important research findings are published and disseminated to the public through independent peer review, careful editing, printing and web hosting. In an effort to continue this collaborative relationship, we ask for your consideration of a proposal supported by our organizations. We believe will achieve NIH's goals of enhancing public access to publications reporting on NIH funded research while preserving the important role of scientific journals in peer review and maintaining the integrity of the scientific record.

We seek your participation in a public-private partnership taking advantage of the fact that most nonprofit publishers make the contents of their journals freely available to the public within 12 months of publication. We propose that NIH provide public access through its existing system of links from the abstracts that are indexed in the Medline/PubMed database rather than hosting author manuscripts on the PubMed Central website. By linking to journal websites NIH can provide access to more than a million articles that are available without cost to the government or to the reader.

A summary of our proposal is attached to this letter. The steering group for our organizations would like to meet with you to further discuss the benefits of this proposal and how our organizations can work with you to maximize the public's access to research publications. Dr. Laura Brockway of FASEB will be in contact with your office to see if such a meeting can be arranged. Please contact her at 301-634-7650 if you have any additional questions.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) “Policy on Enhancing Public Access to Archived Publications Resulting from NIH Funded Research”: Not-For-Profit Scientific Publishers’ Proposal for Improving Compliance and Achieving NIH Goals

Background and Challenge

On May 2, 2005, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) began to implement its new “Policy on Enhancing Public Access to Archived Publications Resulting from NIH Funded Research.” This policy requests that NIH grantees submit to NIH PubMed Central (PMC) manuscripts reporting on NIH-funded research after they have been peer reviewed and accepted for publication in scientific journals. At the time of submission, grantees are asked to designate a public release date that is 12 months or less after publication.

To implement this policy, NIH has communicated with NIH-funded scientists to explain the goals of the new policy (to enhance public access to scientific research and to better manage the NIH portfolio) as well as the manuscript submission process. However, NIH estimates that only 3% of available unpublished manuscripts have been uploaded to PMC.

Not-for-profit publishers’ solution

The undersigned organizations and not-for-profit journals offer the following proposal as a means of helping NIH achieve its goals while also addressing our community’s two major concerns about the policy. These concerns are:

1. Ensuring the integrity of the scientific literature by publicly disseminating only the final, published article, rather than the author’s unedited manuscript, and
2. Preserving the critically important role of scientific journals which peer review, edit, and publish articles resulting from NIH-funded research, providing independent validation of both the research results and the use of federal tax dollars to support scientific research.

The undersigned organizations and journals propose a public-private partnership with NIH that would take advantage of the fact that most not-for-profit publishers already make **all** their research articles - not just NIH supported ones - available for free to the public 12 months or less after publication. Instead of NIH/PMC undertaking a whole new publishing venture that involves formatting and publishing unfinished manuscripts of NIH-funded authors, NIH should use existing links from NIH’s highly respected PubMed (a venerable search engine of scientific literature) to our journals’ websites. Using these links, readers can access the final, published articles already residing on our journals’ websites. Linking is seamless; the reader would simply click on the desired link and would be transferred automatically to the journal’s website. If NIH so desires, these journals could identify for readers the articles that result from NIH-funded research.

To address NIH’s desire to create an internal archive of manuscripts reporting NIH-funded research, journals would provide to NIH immediate access to journal content for internal use.

This proposal has the following advantages

1. NIH would, through existing links to journals, be able to help the public access millions of articles that are posted on private journal websites. Many not-for-profit publishers post their journals online through HighWire Press, a division of Stanford University Libraries. HighWire Press is the largest repository of free full-text life science articles in the world, containing over 15 million articles and nearly 1 million total free full-text articles, with approximately 10,000 more articles becoming available free each month. Since May 2, 2005, 121,434 free articles had been posted at HighWire, in striking contrast with 346 free author manuscripts that had been posted by PMC.
2. Linking would enable NIH to direct the public to vastly more scientific and health information, because NIH estimates it funds only about 10% of the research that is published in the scientific literature.
3. NIH could make these articles available to the public at significantly less cost than the new NIH policy, which requires NIH to receive, edit, and post manuscripts, since publishers are already providing these services at no additional cost to the public.
4. Compliance with new NIH policy would dramatically increase because scientist-authors would not have to take any additional steps to comply; they would simply continue submitting their manuscripts to their professional journals, as they always have.
5. Scientist-authors would be protected from inadvertently violating the copyright agreements that they commonly sign with journals prior to the publication of their work.
6. NIH could spend far less time and effort educating scientists regarding the submission of manuscripts. NIH would work instead with scientific journal staff to ensure the successful linking to articles.
7. The public would have access to the most accurate scientific information possible because they would see only the final, published version of the article, not the author's unedited manuscript.
8. The integrity of the scientific record would be ensured because only the final, published version of the article would be publicly available and privately archived by NIH.
9. Not-for-profit journals would be better able to retain the value of their journals' identities and investments, helping to sustain the functions of peer-review and publishing of research results.

Why NIH should rely on professional scientific societies

Not-for-profit scientific journals are integral parts of professional scientific societies and play a critically important role in the development and advancement of science. Our societies and the journals they publish are responsible stewards of the scientific and biomedical literature,

providing high quality peer-review, editing, publishing and archiving services for NIH-funded research. In this capacity, we have had a long, successful, and valued public-private partnership with NIH that we hope will continue to flourish. The proposal we put forth today would strengthen that important partnership and offers the best possibility for NIH to achieve its goals promptly, efficiently, at low cost, and with the support of the scientific publishing community.

List of groups co-signing (Organization and Journal(s))

American Academy of Periodontology
Journal of Periodontology

American Association for Cancer Research
Cancer Research
Clinical Cancer Research
Molecular Cancer Therapeutics
Molecular Cancer Research
Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention.

American Association for Clinical Chemistry
Clinical Chemistry

American Association of Immunologists
The Journal of Immunology

American College of Chest Physicians
CHEST

American College of Physicians
Annals of Internal Medicine
ACP Journal Club

American Dairy Science Association
Journal of Dairy Science

American Dental Association
The Journal of the American Dental Association

American Dental Education Association
Journal of Dental Education

American Diabetes Association
Diabetes
Diabetes Care
Clinical Diabetes
Diabetes Spectrum

American Geriatrics Society
The Journal of the American Geriatrics Society

American Institute of Biological Sciences
BioScience

American Physiological Society
American Journal of Physiology (AJP)
AJP - Cell Physiology
AJP - Endocrinology and Metabolism
AJP - Gastrointestinal and Liver Physiology
AJP - Heart and Circulatory Physiology
AJP - Lung Cellular and Molecular Physiology
AJP - Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology
AJP - Renal Physiology
Journal of Applied Physiology
Journal of Neurophysiology
Physiological Reviews
Physiological Genomics
Advances in Physiology Education
Physiology

American Psychiatric Association
American Journal of Psychiatry
Psychiatric Services
Academic Psychiatry
Psychosomatics
The Journal Of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences
Focus—The Journal of Lifelong learning in Psychiatry

American Roentgen Ray Society
American Journal of Roentgenology

American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
The Journal of Biological Chemistry
Molecular and Cellular Proteomics
Journal of Lipid Research

American Society for Clinical Pathology
American Journal of Clinical Pathology
LabMedicine

American Society for Investigative Pathology
The American Journal of Pathology
The Journal of Molecular Diagnostics

American Society for Nutrition
The Journal of Nutrition
American Journal of Clinical Nutrition

American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics
Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics
Pharmacological Reviews
Molecular Pharmacology
Drug Metabolism and Disposition
Molecular Interventions

American Society of Animal Science
The Journal of Animal Science

American Society of Hematology
Blood

American Society of Human Genetics

American Society of Plant Biologists
Plant Physiology
The Plant Cell

American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene
American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene

American Thoracic Society
American Journal of Respiratory Cell and Molecular Biology
American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine
Proceeding of the American Thoracic Society

Association for Molecular Pathology
The Journal of Molecular Diagnostics

Biophysical Society
Biophysical Journal

Botanical Society of America
American Journal of Botany
Plant Science Bulletin

Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press
Genes & Development
Genome Research
Learning & Memory

European Molecular Biology Organization
The EMBO Journal
EMBOreports

Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology
The FASEB Journal

HighWire Press, Stanford University

Infectious Diseases Society of America
Journal of Infectious Diseases
Clinical Infectious Diseases

Massachusetts Medical Society
New England Journal of Medicine

Ornithological Council
Auk (American Ornithologists' Union)
Condor (Cooper Ornithological Society)
Journal of Field Ornithology (Association of Field Ornithologists)
Studies in Avian Biology (Cooper Ornithological Society)
Pacific Seabirds (Pacific Seabird Group)
Wilson Bulletin (Wilson Ornithological Society)

Poultry Science Association
Journal of Applied Poultry Research
Poultry Science

Project Hope
Health Affairs

Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine
Experimental Biology and Medicine

Society for Leukocyte Biology
Journal of Leukocyte Biology

Society for the Study of Reproduction
Biology of Reproduction

Society of Nuclear Medicine
Journal of Nuclear Medicine Technology
The Journal of Nuclear Medicine

Society of Toxicologic Pathology
Toxicologic Pathology

The American Society of Nephrology
Journal of the American Society of Nephrology
Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology

The Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology
Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science
Journal of Vision

The Endocrine Society
Endocrinology
Endocrine Reviews
The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism
Molecular Endocrinology

The Entomological Society of America
Annals of the Entomological Society of America
Environmental Entomology
Journal of Economic Entomology
Journal of Medical Entomology
American Entomologist

The Histochemical Society
Journal of Histochemistry and Cytochemistry

The Physiological Society
Experimental Physiology
The Journal of Physiology

The Protein Society
Protein Science

The International & American Associations for Dental Research
Journal of Dental Research
Critical Reviews in Oral Biology & Medicine
Advances in Dental Research

The Radiological Society of North America
Radiology
RadioGraphics

The RNA Society
RNA

The Rockefeller University Press
The Journal of Cell Biology
The Journal of Experimental Medicine
The Journal of General Physiology

The Royal College of Psychiatrists
British Journal of Psychiatry
Psychiatric Bulletin
Advances in Psychiatric Treatment

The Society of Surgical Oncology
Annals of Surgical Oncology