

January 27, 2025

Dear Colleagues,

I am incredibly honored to serve as the Acting Director of the National Institutes of Health to ensure that the conduct of critical biomedical research to improve the health of all Americans can continue. President Trump nominated Jay Bhattacharya, M.D., Ph.D., as the 18th NIH director. My singular focus in the role of Acting NIH Director is to support the transition of the new administration until a new NIH director is confirmed by the U.S. Senate and is onboard at NIH.

As you know, the Department of Health and Human Services has issued a pause on mass communications and public appearances that are not directly related to emergencies or critical to preserving health. This is a short pause to allow the new team to set up a process for review and prioritization. There are exceptions for announcements that HHS divisions believe are mission critical, but they will be made on a case-by-case basis.

I understand there has been confusion on the scope of the pause and wanted to provide additional guidance and clarifications:

Clinical trials at NIH or NIH-funded institutions are ongoing. Research participants can continue to participate in clinical trials at the NIH Clinical Center and at NIH-funded facilities. Additionally, travel restrictions do not apply to research participants traveling to NIH to participate in a clinical trial or protocol.

Procurements and contracting should continue for anything directly related to human safety, human or animal healthcare, security, biosafety, biosecurity, or IT security.

Laboratory procurements and contracting should continue for necessary supplies and support for ongoing research experiments that began before January 20, 2025, so that this work can continue, and we do not lose our investment in these studies. At this time, no procurements or contracting should be made for new studies, new equipment, or research services unrelated to the studies that were started prior to January 20, 2025.

Hiring of individuals whose work is directly necessary for immediate human safety, human or animal healthcare, security, biosafety, biosecurity, or IT security may continue if these individuals are approved for exemption from the hiring freeze by the Office of the Director. Please submit those exemptions with justification as needed until the hiring freeze is lifted.

Submission of papers or abstracts to scientific journals and meetings should continue to follow standard IC approval processes. This does not include pre-print articles which remain paused. Communications with journals on previously submitted works may also continue.

Any meetings or communication regarding research that was already ongoing before January 20, 2025, may continue if it does not involve public release of information or presentation of data outside of those individuals who are part of the research or facilitation/funding of that research. Therefore, communications like meetings of investigators working on a particular project together, program officers meeting with investigators, communication with contractors currently working on a particular ongoing project, Data Safety Monitoring Boards, Institutional Review Boards, and other similar communications may continue as normal to allow ongoing studies to continue.

Travel for the purpose of human safety, human or animal healthcare, security, biosafety, biosecurity, or IT security may continue.

Travel for any meetings per #6 above may also continue if meetings cannot be done remotely to maintain our investment in ongoing research.

Any travel for meetings or public events not covered in #6 above planned after February 1, 2025, does not need to be cancelled at this time and planning for such travel may continue. On February 1, 2025, we will issue new guidance regarding travel for public events and meetings if the pause is still in place. If it is, just be aware that those meetings may need to be cancelled.

We anticipate additional guidance from HHS this week and will continue to keep staff informed of updates. Thank you for your diligence and commitment to the NIH mission as we navigate the transition.

Sincerely,

Matthew J. Memoli, M.D., M.S.

Acting Director, NIH