

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, May 21, 2012

Contact: NIDA Press Office
301-443-6245
media@nida.nih.gov

NIH selects 11 Centers of Excellence in Pain Education
NIH Pain Consortium partners with selected health professional schools

The National Institutes of Health Pain Consortium has selected 11 health professional schools as designated Centers of Excellence in Pain Education (CoEPEs). The CoEPEs will act as hubs for the development, evaluation, and distribution of pain management curriculum resources for medical, dental, nursing and pharmacy schools to enhance and improve how health care professionals are taught about pain and its treatment. Twenty institutes, centers and offices at NIH are involved in the consortium.

“Virtually all health professionals are called upon to help patients suffering from pain,” said NIH Director Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D. “These new centers will translate current research findings about pain management to fill what have been recognized as gaps in curricula so clinicians in all fields can work with their patients to make better and safer choices about pain treatment.”

The new Centers of Excellence in Pain Education were selected by the [NIH Pain Consortium](#) after a contract solicitation process and review. The awardees are the University of Washington, Seattle; the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine, Philadelphia; Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville; the University of Rochester, N.Y.; the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque; the Harvard School of Dental Medicine, Boston; the University of Alabama at Birmingham; the Thomas Jefferson University School of Medicine, Philadelphia; the University of California, San Francisco; the University of Maryland, Baltimore; and the University of Pittsburgh. Many of the new CoEPEs will build curricula across several of their health professional schools.

“We were impressed with the scope and breadth of the proposals that came in from academic centers around the country---all recognizing the need for a more coordinated approach to the treatment of pain,” said Dr. Story C. Landis, Ph.D., director of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), and chair of the consortium. “We are confident that these eleven centers will lead the way in improving pain education for health care professionals, and ultimately, the quality of care for people who suffer from chronic pain.”

Chronic pain affects approximately 100 million Americans, costing up to \$635 billion in medical treatment and lost productivity, and producing immeasurable suffering for people of every age. Yet, pain treatment is not taught extensively in many health professional schools, and clinical approaches can be inconsistent. The curricula developed by the CoEPEs will advance the assessment, diagnosis, and safe treatment of a wide variety of pain conditions while minimizing the abuse of opioid pain relievers. They will include multiple case-based scenarios, many taught

in video or electronic formats popularly used in contemporary academic settings. Types of pain of particular interest to the NIH Pain Consortium are rehabilitation pain, arthritis and musculoskeletal pain, neuropathic pain, and headache pain. In addition, the curricula will teach about the pathophysiology and pharmacology of pain and its treatment, the latest research in complementary and integrative pain management, factors that contribute to both under- and over-prescribing of pain medications, and how pain manifests itself differently by gender, in children, in older adults and in diverse populations.

NIH institutes and centers funding the CoEPEs include the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), which is coordinating the project; *the Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development; the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine; the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research; the National Institute of Nursing Research; the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases; the National Institute on Aging; the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research; the Office of Research on Women's Health; and NINDS. Other NIH institutes and centers that are part of the consortium will act as technical advisors to the project. The full list of the consortium members can be found at: <http://painconsortium.nih.gov/members.html>

“While opioid pain medications have improved the quality of life for millions who suffer from pain, they can also produce harmful consequences, including addiction,” said NIDA Director Nora D. Volkow, M.D., a member of the consortium's executive committee. “These new CoEPEs can help prevent negative outcomes by designing curricula that promote appropriate screening and management of chronic pain patients, along with education about the risks of prescription drug abuse.”

NIH supports the full spectrum of pain research from basic understanding of pain mechanisms through translation of discoveries into treatments and prevention strategies. In FY 2011, NIH supported \$386 million in research focused on chronic pain, not including the related diseases that often cause chronic pain, such as cancer, arthritis, diabetes, and stroke. The details of individual pain-focused grants are publicly available on the [NIH RePORTER website](#). Enhancing education of pain care professionals was highlighted in the June 2011 Institute of Medicine report, “[Relieving Pain in America: A Blueprint for Transforming Prevention, Care, Education, and Research](#).”

###

About the NIH Pain Consortium: The NIH Pain Consortium was established to enhance pain research and promote collaboration among researchers across the many NIH Institutes and Centers that have programs and activities addressing pain. Its goals include the development of a comprehensive and forward-thinking pain research agenda for the NIH; to identify key opportunities in pain research within NIH and the scientific community; to increase visibility for pain research; and to pursue the pain research agenda through Public-Private partnerships. For more information on the Pain Consortium, visit <http://painconsortium.nih.gov/index.html>.

About the National Institutes of Health (NIH): NIH, the nation's medical research agency, includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIH is the primary federal agency conducting and supporting basic, clinical, and translational medical research, and is investigating the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. The NIH Blueprint for Neuroscience Research is currently conducting a Grand Challenge on pain. The goal of the Grand Challenge is to establish collaborative research between pain scientists and non-pain neuroscientists from other fields, such as learning and memory, to learn how

changes in neural signaling and circuitry underlie chronic pain. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.

NIH...Turning Discovery Into Health