

**American College of Cardiology**  
**Richard J. Kovacs, MD, FACC, President**

The American College of Cardiology (ACC) commends Congress for boosting funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in FY18 and FY19, and mandatory increases for the NIH as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act and the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018. These significant investments will help spur the development and implementation of medical innovations. To continue this important progress and ensure future medical research advancements in FY20 and beyond, ACC urges members of Congress to appropriate the following funds toward agencies doing vital work in cardiovascular disease (CVD) treatment and prevention: \$3.71 billion for the National Heart Lung & Blood Institute (NHLBI) and \$2.36 billion toward the National Institute of Neurological Disorders & Stroke (NINDS) to increase the NIH's purchasing power and preserve U.S. leadership in research; \$160 million toward the CDC's Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention to strengthen heart disease prevention efforts at state and local levels, \$5 million toward CDC's Million Hearts to prevent 1 million heart attacks and strokes by 2022, \$45.6 million toward CDC's WISEWOMAN to help uninsured or under-insured women prevent or control heart disease, \$10 million toward CDC congenital heart research to study its effects over the patient's lifespan, and \$310 million toward CDC's Office on Smoking and Health to maintain the program's cost-effective tobacco control efforts.

ACC envisions a world where innovation and knowledge optimize cardiovascular care and outcomes. As the professional home for the entire cardiovascular team, the mission of the College and its more than 52,000 members is to transform cardiovascular care and improve heart health. The ACC bestows credentials upon cardiovascular professionals who meet stringent qualifications and leads in the formation of health policy, standards and guidelines. The College also provides professional medical education, disseminates cardiovascular research through its world-renowned

JACC Journals, operates national registries to measure and improve care, and offers cardiovascular accreditation to hospitals and institutions.

CVD, a class of diseases that includes diseased blood vessels, structural problems, and blood clots, continues to be the leading cause of death among men and women in the United States and is responsible for 1 in every 4 deaths<sup>1</sup>. More than 92 million Americans currently suffer from some form of CVD – nearly one-third of the population – but it remains one of the most underfunded deadly diseases, as the NIH only invests 4 percent of its research dollars on heart research<sup>2</sup>. Despite reduced capacity to fund grants and new discoveries over the last decade, the NIH continues to enhance and save millions of lives. The heart disease death rate has continued to drop since the 1970s<sup>3</sup> due to scientific advances and improved heart medications and procedures - but to meet the challenges of an aging population, rising obesity rates and unhealthy diets, the NIH must maintain its place at the forefront of medical innovation for years to come. The NHLBI, the third-largest institute at the NIH, conducts research related to heart, blood vessel, lung, and blood diseases, generating drugs for lowering cholesterol, controlling blood pressure, and dissolving blood clots. These biomedical advancements have contributed to a 71 percent<sup>4</sup> decrease in death rates due to cardiovascular disease. NHLBI's recent groundbreaking research found that more intensive management of high blood pressure in people 50 years and older reduces cardiovascular events by almost 25 percent<sup>5</sup>. **We recommend that NHLBI be funded at**

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<sup>1</sup> Heart Disease Facts; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm>

<sup>2</sup> National Coalition for Heart and Stroke Research; American Heart Association.

[http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Advocate/IssuesandCampaigns/Research/National-Coalition-for-Heart-and-Stroke-Research\\_UCM\\_428347\\_Article.jsp#.Wt4h-m4vypo](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Advocate/IssuesandCampaigns/Research/National-Coalition-for-Heart-and-Stroke-Research_UCM_428347_Article.jsp#.Wt4h-m4vypo)

<sup>3</sup> Heart Disease; National Institutes of Health Fact Sheets.

<https://report.nih.gov/NIHfactsheets/ViewFactSheet.aspx?csid=96>

<sup>4,5</sup> HHS/NIH/NHLBI FY2017 Congressional Justification Report;

[https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/sites/default/files/media/docs/Final%20NHLBI%202017%20CJ\\_R508\\_v1\\_0.pdf](https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/sites/default/files/media/docs/Final%20NHLBI%202017%20CJ_R508_v1_0.pdf)

**\$3.71 billion to maintain current activities and investment toward new research and emerging technologies related to heart disease.**

NINDS conducts research on brain and nervous system disorders, including stroke prevention and treatment. Coronary heart disease and stroke share many of the same risk factors such as high cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, smoking, diabetes, physical inactivity, and being overweight or obese. The NINDS Stroke Clinical Trials Network develops high-quality, multi-site clinical trials focused on key interventions in stroke prevention, treatment and recovery. **We recommend that NINDS be funded at \$2.36 billion to enhance its existing initiatives and explore new priorities in stroke prevention.**

The CDC plays a vital role in protecting public health through healthy lifestyle promotion and educational activities designed to curb non-infectious diseases such as obesity, diabetes, stroke, and heart disease. The CDC Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention supports efforts to improve cardiovascular health by promoting healthy lifestyles and behaviors, healthy environments, and access to early detection and affordable treatment. The division engages with local and state health departments, and a variety of other partners, to provide funding and resources, conduct research, track risk factors, and evaluate current programs and policies relating to heart disease. **We recommend that the CDC Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention be funded at \$160 million to continue its prevention activities among the most vulnerable communities.**

The CDC Division for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention promotes education and awareness for peripheral arterial disease (PAD). PAD is a common circulatory problem in which one or more arteries supplying blood to the legs, arms, or abdomen become blocked. PAD affects 200 million patients worldwide and has a higher prevalence than all cancers combined, but the

disease is substantially underdiagnosed since most experience few symptoms until irreversible damage is done and may result in amputation. **We encourage the CDC to enhance education and awareness activities that promote early diagnosis of PAD and ultimately reduce the number of unnecessary amputations that adversely impact millions of lives.**

Launched in 2012 and co-led by the CDC and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Million Hearts program coordinates and enhances CVD prevention activities with the objective of preventing 1 million heart attacks and strokes by the year 2022. The initiative aims to achieve this goal by encouraging the public to lead a healthy and active lifestyle, as well as improving medication adherence for aspirin and other medications to manage blood pressure, cholesterol, and smoking cessation. **We recommend that Million Hearts be funded at \$5 million to enhance efforts preventing heart attacks and strokes.**

CDC's WISEWOMAN initiative provides more than 165,000 under-insured, low-income women ages 40-64 with services to help reduce heart disease and stroke risk factors. Heart disease ranks as the leading cause of death for women. Only 1 in 5 <sup>6</sup>women believes heart disease is her greatest health threat, and 11 percent <sup>7</sup>of women remain uninsured. **We recommend that \$45.6 million be allocated for WISEWOMAN to provide preventive health services, referrals to local health care providers, lifestyle programs, and counseling in all 50 states.**

Congenital heart disease (CHD), a life-long consequence of a structural abnormality of the heart present at birth, is the number one birth defect in the U.S. While the diagnosis and treatment of CHD has greatly improved over the years, most patients with complex heart defects need special care throughout their lives, and only by expanding research opportunities can we

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<sup>6</sup> WISEWOMAN; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/wisewoman/>

<sup>7</sup> Women's Health Insurance Coverage; The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. <http://kff.org/womens-health-policy/fact-sheet/womens-health-insurance-coverage-fact-sheet/>

fully understand the effects of CHD across the lifespan. **As authorized by the Congenital Heart Futures Reauthorization Act of 2017, we recommend that the CDC National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities be funded at \$10 million for enhanced CHD surveillance and public health research.**

Programs within CDC's Office on Smoking and Health (OSH) work to prevent smoking among young adults and eliminate tobacco-related health disparities in different population groups. In 2012, OSH launched the national tobacco education campaign, Tips from Former Smokers, which has motivated more than 5 million<sup>8</sup> people to quit smoking, with at least 400,000 quitting permanently<sup>9</sup>. While these programs have proven effective in tobacco cessation and prevention, more than 480,000 people still die every year from causes attributable to smoking, and 33 percent of those deaths stem from heart disease<sup>10</sup>. **We recommend that OSH be funded at \$310 million to continue leading the nation's efforts in preventing chronic diseases caused by tobacco use.**

On behalf of our members who work to prevent and treat CVD, ACC would like to thank members of Congress for supporting medical innovation as we continue the fight against heart disease. Stable funding for research, surveillance, and healthy lifestyle promotion will not only save lives, but save health care costs in the long term. Medical research nurtures economic growth by creating jobs and new technologies, which will produce billions of dollars in Medicare and Medicaid savings over the next decade. Please help us secure robust funding for NIH and CDC funding to protect the health of future generations.

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<sup>8,9</sup> Office on Smoking and Health; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/about/osh/>

<sup>10</sup>At a Glance 2016 Tobacco Use; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/aag/pdf/2016/tobacco-aag.pdf>