



September 29, 2009

Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D.  
Director  
National Institutes of Health  
Building 1, One Center Drive, Room 126, MSC 0148  
Bethesda, MD 20892-0160

Dear Dr. Collins,

On behalf of AcademyHealth leadership and members, I would like to congratulate you on your recent appointment as Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). It was good to speak with you briefly at the AAMC reception last week. As I mentioned then, we really appreciated your speaking at our National Health Policy Conference in 2001 on how advances in genomics and technology would change health care in the new century.

As you know, AcademyHealth is the professional society for health services research (HSR) and health policy. AcademyHealth represents nearly 3,800 individual scientists, analysts, and decision makers and 160 agencies and organizations that produce and use health services research. We look forward to working with you as NIH “puts science to work for the benefit of health care reform.”

AcademyHealth believes that HSR will need to play a vital role in assuring our country meets its stated goals for improving health and the effectiveness of our health system. This research will be needed to improve mechanisms used for the payment and financing of health care; for measures and mechanisms to improve the quality of care; and for approaches to expand coverage and access to affordable services. HSR provides patients, providers, payers, and policymakers with the necessary information to make critical health and health care decisions.

NIH is recognized worldwide as the leader in basic and clinical research. Often overlooked, however, is the crucial role NIH plays in health services research **NIH now funds approximately 60 percent of the total \$1.68 billion** federal investment in health services research.<sup>1</sup> In a recent survey of our members, AcademyHealth found that nearly half of our members (49%) reported that they receive NIH grants.

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<sup>1</sup> Coalition for Health Services Research. *Federal Funding for Health Services Research*, AcademyHealth, February 2009. Also see <http://www.chsr.org/coalitionfunding2008.pdf>.

In response to your invitation to provide our perspective on future research needs, we are pleased to provide our assessment. To better understand the needs facing this field, AcademyHealth has convened two summits of our members and stakeholders. The first summit on workforce needs held in November 2007 found that new funding will be needed to develop and retain a next generation of health services researchers. (The report of this summit will be published this December in the journal, Health Services Research. Our second summit was held in June, 2009, with participants calling for significant new investment in data systems, and methods for measuring and analyzing how patients and providers interact with the health care system. As NIH seeks to expand its health services research portfolio, we hope you will provide a high priority to bolstering training for new scientists and to increasing the investment in new data systems and methods.

Greater coordination across both public and private funders of health services research is also a recognized need that we hope NIH will continue to support. For two years, NIH has participated in AcademyHealth's Council of Sponsors, chaired by Mark McClellan of Brookings Institute and Risa Lavizzo-Mourey of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and comprised of leaders from the major public and private funders of health services research. The Council facilitates dialogue among funders regarding needs and priorities and has been a major supporter of our recent summits. We are pleased the NIH will continue its participation on the Council through its newly appointed representative Christine Bachrach.

Since its founding in 2000, AcademyHealth has had a productive and meaningful relationship with NIH. We look forward to helping you advance the mission of NIH as it continues to lead the world in providing research to improve health and health care. We welcome the opportunity to meet with you and your staff to explore new opportunities to work together. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 202.292.6700 or [david.helms@academyhealth.org](mailto:david.helms@academyhealth.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Helms", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

W. David Helms, Ph.D.  
President & CEO