

August 24, 2021

Comments for proposed NIDDK Strategic Plan for Research

Submitted by: Men's Health Network

Men's Health Network (MHN) is a national non-profit organization whose mission is to reach men, boys, and their families where they live, work, play and pray with health awareness and disease prevention messages and tools, screening programs, educational materials, advocacy opportunities, and patient navigation.

MHN appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Strategic Plan for Research developed by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). We applaud NIDDK's mission to conduct and support medical research and research training and to disseminate science-based information on diabetes and other endocrine and metabolic diseases; digestive diseases, nutritional disorders, and obesity; and kidney, urologic, and hematologic diseases, to improve people's health and quality of life.

The Strategic Plan for Research presents an opportunity to eliminate gender and other disparities, and improve the health and well-being of men and their families. An involved, healthy father has a direct impact on his family by staying healthy, being a role model for his children, and providing support for their mother—but for this to happen, health systems must address the unique challenge of engaging men and boys in healthcare while encouraging healthy behaviors and lifestyles.

There is a silent health crisis in America. Men live sicker and die sooner than their female counterparts, dying at higher rates from 9 of the top 10 causes of death. In fact, several of the conditions in NIDDK's portfolio are included in the top 10 causes of death, and many of these conditions affect men at the same rate or worse than in women.

We thank you for considering the comments outlined below:

NIDDK's Portfolio of Conditions

Diabetes

According to the 2020 National Diabetes Statistics Report released by the CDC, diabetes is more prevalent in men than in women.ⁱ Additionally, data for the top 10 causes of death show that men die from diabetes at a rate of 1.6 times more than women.ⁱⁱ Addressing the prevalence of diabetes in men in NIDDK clinical research will improve the overall public health of men and women in America.

Obesity

CDC data published in 2020 show that there is no statistical difference in the prevalence of obesity between men and women.ⁱⁱⁱ

Interstitial cystitis/bladder pain syndrome (IC/BPS)

The Interstitial Cystitis Association states that doctors commonly misdiagnose IC/BPS in men. Men would be best served by additional research on IC/BPS in men.^{iv}

Fecal and Urinary Incontinence

Research published in NIH's National Library of Medicine demonstrates that there is no statistical difference in the prevalence of incontinence between men and women.^v

Kidney diseases and kidney failure

Research published in the Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology shows that while the incidence of kidney diseases occur more in women than men, men are more likely to die from it.^{vi}

Liver and biliary diseases

Research published in the National Center for Biotechnology Information shows that men are two times more likely to die from liver diseases than women.^{vii} Data for the top 10 causes of death support these findings.ⁱⁱ

Urinary tract infections (UTIs)

Research published in NIH's National Library of Medicine shows that UTI's affect women more than men before old age, but that the incidences of UTIs in men and women are similar during old age.^{viii}

In closing, we support the effort to improve the health and well-being of women in your research plan draft. With the findings listed in these comments, however, we find it paramount that NIDDK include a focus on men in its clinical trials and future research endeavors. In doing so, NIDDK can address health issues that directly affect men and improve their health outcomes. Therefore, we ask that NIDDK include the health needs of men, in addition to women, in their Strategic Plan for Research.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important topic that affects so many men, women, and their families.

Sincerely,

David Grogan
Men's Health Network
P.O. Box 75972
Washington, D.C. 20013

ⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pdfs/data/statistics/national-diabetes-statistics-report.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.menshealthnetwork.org/library/causesofdeath.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db360.htm>

^{iv} <https://www.ichelp.org/men-with-icbps-present-a-particular-challenge-for-effective-treatment/>

^v <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16572280/>

^{vi} <https://cjasn.asnjournals.org/content/14/11/1557>

^{vii} <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3992057/>

^{viii} <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11253265/>