

Healthspan Campaign and NIH GeroScience Interest Group Update

For the past three years, the Alliance for Aging Research, has led the [Healthspan Campaign](#)—an awareness campaign to educate the public and policymakers about the need to focus and adequately fund basic research into the underlying processes of aging—that can extend a person’s healthy years of life. The rationale behind the Healthspan Campaign is presented in an aging-focused research agenda endorsed by more than 100 of the world’s most prominent scientists, clinicians, and aging experts.

Throughout the first half of 2012 the Alliance and its Healthspan Campaign partners met with leadership of the National Institute on Aging (NIA), the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Stroke (NINDS), the National Institute of Arthritis Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), the National Institute of Diabetes Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI), and the National Cancer Institute (NCI). As a result of this advocacy, in less than six months the National Institute on Aging (NIA)—through its Division of Aging Biology—took the lead in establishing a [GeroScience Interest Group \(GSIG\)](#) to coordinate discussion and action across the NIH on understanding the role aging plays in our susceptibility to age-related diseases. Of the 27 Institutes and Centers that make up the NIH, 20 are now members of the GSIG—making it one of the fast-growing interest groups at the NIH.

An announcement of the GSIG was included in the March/April 2012 issue of “The NIH Catalyst,” the NIH’s intramural research newsletter and Dr. Felipe Sierra, NIA Division of Aging Biology Director and GSIG Coordinator, was awarded an NIH Director’s award for his leadership of the GSIG.

The work of the GSIG was recognized in report language in the FY 2013 Senate Labor, Health and Human Services (LHHS) Appropriations bill. In addition LHHS Subcommittee Chairman, Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), inquired of NIA Director Dr. Richard Hodes about the GSIG at the April 2012 [hearing](#). Congressman Bilbray (R-CA), also submitted questions on future plans for the GSIG subsequent to the House Energy & Commerce Committee hearing held on NIH research priorities.

In October 2013, a historic gathering of more than 50 scientists and 500+ registrants for *Advances in Geroscience: Impact on Healthspan and Chronic Disease*, took place at the Natcher Conference Center on the NIH campus. The summit was opened by NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins, and seven scientific sessions explored common mechanisms governing relationships between aging and chronic diseases. [Day 1](#) and [day 2](#) are available via webcast. In addition, on the day before the summit started, the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging sponsored a roundtable on Capitol Hill for an advance briefing for senators and congressional staff on the summit. Testimony and video from the roundtable is available on the Committee’s [website](#). [Research recommendations](#) from the summit were approved the NIA’s National Advisory Council on Aging in February of 2014. A [special supplement](#) of the *Journals of Gerontology*

Biological Sciences & Medical Sciences titled “Frontiers in Geroscience” was published in June 2014.

The GSIG was recently discussed with the Office of Management and Budget, in an FY 2016 budget request meeting in September 2014 that included the Alliance for Aging Research, Friends of the NIA, Gerontological Society of America, and others. The Alliance explained the progress of the GSIG and asked for future support of an interagency coordinating committee on Geroscience within NIH—similar to what was established for diabetes in 1974.