

View Edit

Home > Blogs > Capitol Connection > NIH Seeks New Uses For Pharmaceutical Compounds

## Capitol Connection

### NIH seeks new uses for pharmaceutical compounds

July 8, 2013 | Author: Summer Allen, Graduate and Postdoc, Brown University



A new program challenges basic researchers to find new uses for pharmaceutical drug compounds that haven't been successful (Image: CDC and Debora Cartagena)

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has begun funding a new pilot partnership program between pharmaceutical companies and basic researchers. The program's goal is for basic researchers to find new uses for drug compounds that were discovered by pharmaceutical companies but have not lived up to their intended use.

This pilot project is called "Discovering New Therapeutic Uses for Existing Molecules" and was originally launched in May 2012. Eight pharmaceutical companies provided 58 potential drugs for the pilot program, and the NIH solicited ideas for new uses of these compounds. On June 18<sup>th</sup>, the NIH funded nine grant awards—totaling

\$12.7 million dollars—to academic research groups who will test compounds for their potential to treat various diseases including alcoholism, nicotine dependence, Alzheimer's disease, Duchenne muscular dystrophy, calcific aortic valve stenosis, peripheral artery disease, and schizophrenia. You can learn more about the specific projects on [this website](#). These grants will provide up to two years of funding for proof-of-concept preliminary experiments.

There are several advantages to this program. The molecules that will be tested by the basic researchers involved in the pilot projects have already undergone Phase I clinical trials and thus—if preliminary testing for a new disease treatment is promising—can be rapidly transitioned into further human clinical testing. NIH has other funding mechanisms in place to move these compounds to Phase IIa trials. Of course, this is a partnership, so the industry partners will benefit as well. According to the program's [frequently asked questions](#), the collaborating company will have the first shot at licensing any new intellectual property that arises from the new academic research. If there is no longer an active patent on the molecule or the company decides to pass on further commercial development, the academic researcher will be free to find another company to work with.

This program seems like an interesting idea, and I'll be curious to see if the preliminary grants bear fruit. It's certainly a good deal for the pharmaceutical company partners—according to the NIH, it takes an average of 13 years to take a new drug to market and 95 percent of potential drug compounds never make it to the clinic. So any potential new therapeutic use for 'failed' compounds is a win for them. It's more of a high-risk, high-potential reward scenario for the researchers who will spend a great deal of time and effort testing these molecules. But even if just one of these compounds shows promising results for one target disease, it could be a huge boon for patients desperately in need of new treatment options.

Most Emailed Most Commented

Last 24 hours This Week This Month

Why do some graduate students take longer to finish their Ph.D.s?

Scientific breakthroughs that were 'accidents'

Robert Kirshner and the beauty of our accelerating universe

## Newsletters

AAAS Policy Alert - September 11, 2013

BioMed Roundup - September 2013

AAAS Policy Alert - September 5, 2013

[VIEW MORE NEWSLETTERS](#)

## Categories

- Science Policy (359)
- K-12 Education (151)
- Undergraduate Education (128)
- International Co-operation (90)
- Human Rights (34)
- Public Engagement (181)
- Evolution (70)
- Climate Change (100)
- Energy (71)
- Medicine (174)
- Workforce Development (148)
- Career Development (165)
- Diversity (91)
- Communicating Science (219)
- Biology (178)
- Chemistry (40)
- Earth Sciences (39)
- Engineering (55)
- Physics (46)
- Social Sciences (32)

No comments

Add your comment

Name Summerallen

Subject

Your Comments \*

**Input format**

Post this comment anonymously

**Save**

- Notify me when new comments are posted
- All comments
- Replies to my comment

**More From Us:**



**Changing the face of photography**



**Quantum computing: The next information revolution**



**New clues to the mysterious bee die off**



**From beans to weapon: The discovery of ricin**



**Changing your DNA with exercise!**

Recommended by 

[ABOUT](#) | [CONTACT US](#) | [SUBMIT FEEDBACK](#)