

DISABILITY AND REHABILITATION RESEARCH COALITION

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Section 2040 – Legislation to Elevate Rehabilitation Science at NIH

On December 7, 2016, Congress passed bipartisan legislation to enhance and better coordinate medical rehabilitation research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as part of the landmark 21st Century Cures Act. Senators Mark Kirk (R-IL.) and Michael Bennet (D-CO) and Congressmen Jim Langevin (D-RI) and Gregg Harper (R-MS) originally introduced companion bills (S. 800 and H.R. 1631) on this important issue in March of 2015. Their rehabilitation research legislation, the Enhancing the Stature and Visibility of Medical Rehabilitation Research at the NIH Act, was included in Section 2040 of the 21st Century Cures Act, which is expected to be signed into law by President Obama.

Section 2040 builds upon the conclusions and recommendations of an NIH Blue Ribbon Panel on Medical Rehabilitation Research which issued a comprehensive report in January 2013. The panel concluded that rehabilitation research is not thriving at NIH and that reforms are needed to assist people with injuries, illnesses, disabilities and chronic conditions maximize their health and their ability to function, live independently, and return to work if possible.

NIH conducts and supports approximately \$300 million in medical rehabilitation research annually, \$70 million of which is supported by the National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research (NCMRR) located in the Eunice Shriver National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

Section 2040:

- Builds upon the conclusions and recommendations of an NIH Blue Ribbon Panel on Medical Rehabilitation Research which issued a comprehensive report in January 2013. The panel concluded that rehabilitation research was not thriving at NIH and that reforms are needed;
- Focuses on creating greater links within NIH to help coordinate rehabilitation research across Institutes and Centers to streamline rehabilitation research priorities and maximize the current federal investment in this area of research;
- Involves the Office of the NIH Director in coordination activities, raising the stature of rehabilitation science across the NIH's 27 Institutes and Centers;
- Calls for a Rehabilitation Research Plan to be updated every five years following a scientific conference or workshop. The existing research plan has not been updated since 1993;
- Provides for an annual progress report; ties co-funding of medical rehabilitation research projects to the Research Plan, and includes a definition of medical rehabilitation research to ensure consistent tracking of rehabilitation research across NIH;
- Is bipartisan, has been fully vetted with NIH officials, rehabilitation research organizations, clinical associations and disability and consumer groups, is expected to have no budgetary impact; and,

The Disability and Rehabilitation Research Coalition thanks Congress for including this important legislation in the 21st Century Cures Act.