UMR
UNITED FOR
MEDICAL RESEARCH

MyWHY

MANY VOICES.
MANY REASONS.
ALL UNITED *for*
MEDICAL RESEARCH.

Researchers, patients, and others touched by medical research share why a strongly funded NIH is so important.

“”

Because I believe my research has the power to change lives.

Ken Lau, Nashville, TN >

Forward

Funding for medical research through the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has proven time and again to be one of the very best investments our nation can make.

Since it was created by Congress in 1930, the NIH has fueled discoveries in every aspect of health, driven American innovation, trained a highly skilled biomedical workforce, and boosted the economy. Indeed, the NIH is the envy of countless nations — who are investing heavily in their own research enterprises because they see the power of medical research to not only improve health, but to enhance their economies and global competitiveness.

Yet today, the NIH is on unsteady ground. Over **2,000 NIH grants** totaling almost $3.8 billion awarded to researchers at U.S. institutions were terminated between January and June 2025. More than 1,000 NIH staff were laid off in the first half of 2025. **Other changes** — affecting the types of research NIH funds, the review and approval process for grant proposals, and how NIH pays out grant awards — stand to dramatically and devastatingly impact NIH research going forward. These actions, coupled with a proposed budget cut of nearly 40% in Fiscal Year 2026, make the future far from certain.

The impact of this — on medical research and the people who depend on it — could be felt for generations.

A Proven Powerful Investment

When America invests in medical research through the NIH, it is...

Improving Health

From treatments for heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and countless other conditions, **NIH-funded breakthroughs** and medical innovations have helped people live longer, healthier lives — and more breakthroughs are on the horizon.

Driving American Innovation

NIH funds foundational and long-term research initiatives that are too far removed from commercial application for industry to undertake. Yet, this **discovery-based research** sets the stage for industry-led R&D and helps fuel vital U.S. industries.

Building the Biomedical Workforce

The NIH plays a critical role in building the **next generation** of biomedical innovators. Each year, countless scientists, industry leaders, entrepreneurs, and clinicians receive invaluable training and mentorship through NIH-funded research.

Fueling the Economy

Local economies in every U.S. state benefit from NIH research. In 2024, NIH-funded research supported more than **400,000 jobs and $94.58 billion** in economic activity across the United States — producing $2.56 of economic activity for every $1 of research funding.

Findings

In the face of unprecedented actions affecting NIH research funding, we asked researchers, patients, and others touched by medical research to share their stories of why a strongly funded NIH is so important. Here's what they told us.

ONE

NIH funding has meant everything to their careers.

“NIH funding has been everything to my career.

Neil Osheroff ›
Nashville, TN

“NIH funding has been a key part of every early-stage company I have worked in. Without this funding, we would not have survived.

Ian Walton ›
Redwood City, CA

TWO

NIH research saves lives, including their own lives and the lives of loved ones.

“I am a breast cancer survivor thanks to having better treatment options than my grandmother, and I am a parent of a pediatric cancer survivor given the option to participate in a clinical trial.

Erin Waterman ›
Clinton, WA

THREE

They view research as a public service and a way to contribute to their communities and the world.

“Biomedical research allows me to contribute to American society by improving the health of moms and children.

Natalie Johnson ›
College Station, TX

“I have wanted to help people my entire life. I hope my research will preserve vision in the millions of people with low vision and allow them to lead healthy lives.

Miranda Scalabrino ›
Milwaukee, WI

FOUR

They feel a responsibility to the American taxpayer.

“”

I am forever grateful to the American public who funded my work through the NIH, and I am devoted to paying it back through meaningful science.

Stephanie De Anda >
Eugene, OR

FIVE

They care deeply about training and mentoring the next generation of scientists and researchers.

“”

One of my aspirations is to mentor and educate the next wave of top scientists. By stripping the NIH of funding, we are limiting the odds of the next big discovery, and we are failing to develop the next generation of scientists.

Adam Case >
Bryan, TX

SIX

They worry that the United States is losing its stature as the best place in the world to do science, and what this will mean to society and our economy.

“”

At each step, jobs are created, innovations are developed, and lifelong careers in science are built. Why wouldn’t we want to keep America first in scientific discovery and innovation?

Shawn Austin >
Avon, OH

My WHY

Behind every breakthrough is a person with a story — and a reason why they care. Here are some of the people whose passion is driving progress and transforming lives. Learn why a strong, well-funded NIH matters to them.

Nicki Swann >

NIH-funded Researcher
and Cancer Survivor

Eugene, OR

Because of the NIH, I am cancer-free, and my children are growing up with their mother in their lives. My job is supported by NIH, but my life was saved by it.

Professionally, my scientific training was nearly entirely supported by federal funding through NIH and the National Science Foundation (NSF). Today, I lead an NIH-funded laboratory that focuses on the neuroscience of human movement. One of our core missions is studying brain activity of people with Parkinson's disease to inform treatments. I am also a survivor of stage 3 breast cancer and stage 3 colon cancer.

I have had eight surgeries, multiple rounds and types of chemotherapy and radiation, as well as other targeted therapies. Every one of these treatments was supported in some way by federal funding — whether training the doctors who treated me, funding foundational studies that led to the discoveries I benefit from, or performing the clinical trials that directly led to the discovery of cancer cures. More directly, I was lucky to be a patient in an NIH-funded cancer trial.

I have looked at the research, I know I would likely not be here today had my doctors not benefited from NIH-funded advances in scientific research that led to treatment options that were unavailable only a few years before my diagnoses, underscoring the damage that even short gaps in funding can cause. As a scientist, I am keenly aware of what went into this rapid innovation, and I know it would not have been possible without the NIH and the people who have dedicated their careers to improving lives through science.

Jessica Moore >

Post Doctoral Fellow

Durham, NC

As someone dedicating my career to understanding brain development and disease, I see how many devastating conditions — like Alzheimer's, epilepsy, and brain cancers — still lack effective treatments. NIH funding is the lifeblood of this work.

Back before I had any idea that biomedical research was a career path, I witnessed the battle that my paternal grandmother fought against Alzheimer's disease. At such a young age, I could understand how critical a biomedical breakthrough would be to this devastating disease.

Now, as a postdoctoral researcher, I am studying brain development, with a focus on how the blood-brain barrier matures and is maintained. The blood-brain barrier is a protective shield for your brain — carefully controlling what can pass in and out, shielding it from infection. However, the blood-brain barrier can pose health issues: this barrier can make it difficult to get drugs to the brain (i.e., to treat brain cancer) and can break down in neurological diseases, leading to inflammation.

My PhD thesis work was supported by an NIH grant, and NIH grants to my thesis advisor supported research across the whole lab. In the next year, I am planning to apply for the NIH Pathway to Independence Award, which would support my training toward opening an independent research group to tackle these important scientific questions. I never take these funds for granted. I spend months preparing each application to the NIH, and I always keep in mind the amazing breakthroughs and improvements to human life that fundamental research can provide.

It's only through the NIH that researchers can be nimble enough to pounce on incidental findings with the speed and resources necessary to unlock unexpected solutions and change lives immeasurably.

As an academic physician not involved in biomedical research, I have nevertheless witnessed the daily marvel of scientific discovery translating into improved lives.

During my time as the Director of Pediatric Psychiatry for the Solid Organ Transplant Unit at Massachusetts General Hospital, I was lucky to spend every week with brilliant researchers in organ transplant services, infectious diseases, gastroenterology, and psychiatry. The story I remember most was the incidental finding that children who were immunosuppressed to prevent the rejection of their organ transplantation would sometimes contract serious viral illnesses, such as Epstein-Barr virus. These children would be admitted, and we would quickly withdraw their immunosuppressants.

Thankfully and remarkably, many of these children recovered from the virus — and despite having had the immunosuppressants removed, their transplanted organs were not rejected. This led to a series of experiments in which animals were deliberately infected with the Epstein-Barr virus and then transplanted, leading to tolerance protocols, which to this day have allowed people who have received transplanted organs in life-saving procedures to also forgo immunosuppressants. I remember the palpable excitement as the studies went forward.

Though much remains to be learned, it is still the case that this incidental finding opened up an incredible body of research, and thus hope for people receiving immunosuppressants for a variety of reasons.

Steven Schlozman >

Associate Professor of
Psychiatry and Pediatrics

Burlington, VT

Bradley S. Duerstock >

Professor of Practice

West Lafayette, IN

Only a robustly funded NIH is able to tackle the myriads of biomedical conditions that profoundly impact citizens of the United States daily.

Biomedical research affects me both personally and professionally. I am a professor of practice in biomedical engineering at Purdue University as well as a tetraplegic due to spinal cord injury (SCI). My disability requires me to use a power wheelchair and rely on attendant care to perform typical activities of daily living and to work as a researcher and instructor. My research has been informed greatly by my lived experiences as a paralyzed person.

As a postdoctoral researcher with a disability, I received an NIH supplemental award through a grant that my advisor received studying spinal cord injury repair. That award enabled me to conduct research in an area that I was interested in pursuing and helped establish my early career as a researcher 25 years ago. Later I received the NIH Director's Pathfinder Award, which allowed me to use my experiences as a researcher with a disability to help others better navigate the barriers in attaining higher education and employment in biomedical science and engineering — supporting future generations of researchers with disabilities.

My research focuses on autonomic dysreflexia. I, as well as thousands of persons with SCI, struggle daily with autonomic dysreflexia, but it is not a condition that is commonly studied by SCI researchers.

My Message to Congress

The people who shared their stories with us want policymakers to know that every research grant awarded by the NIH creates a ripple effect that reaches far beyond its initial recipient.

Ultimately, this research adds to the body of knowledge that leads to discoveries that will save lives and improve health, produce new technologies and new companies, and contribute to America's national security and global competitiveness. Read their messages in their own words.

“ ”

As a graduate student, I studied a potential chemotherapeutic that targeted cyclin-dependent kinases (CDKs) to arrest the cell cycle. Part of my thesis focused on CDK6. Fast forward 25 years and I am now a breast cancer patient and survivor, with a much better chance of survival thanks to a new treatment called Verzenio, which is a compound that inhibits CDK4 and CDK6.

It is critical that we stoke the pipeline for new medicines and treatments with discovery-based research so that new potential cures can be tested and make it to the people that need them. Without NIH funding, the pipeline will dry up.

Erin Cram ›
Professor of Biology and Associate Dean for Research
Somerville, MA

NIH-funded research played a role in the development of 99% of drugs approved from 2010 to 2019 (354 of 356 drugs). ›

Suicide deaths among 10- to 24-year-olds increased 62% from 2007 to 2021. ›

“ ”

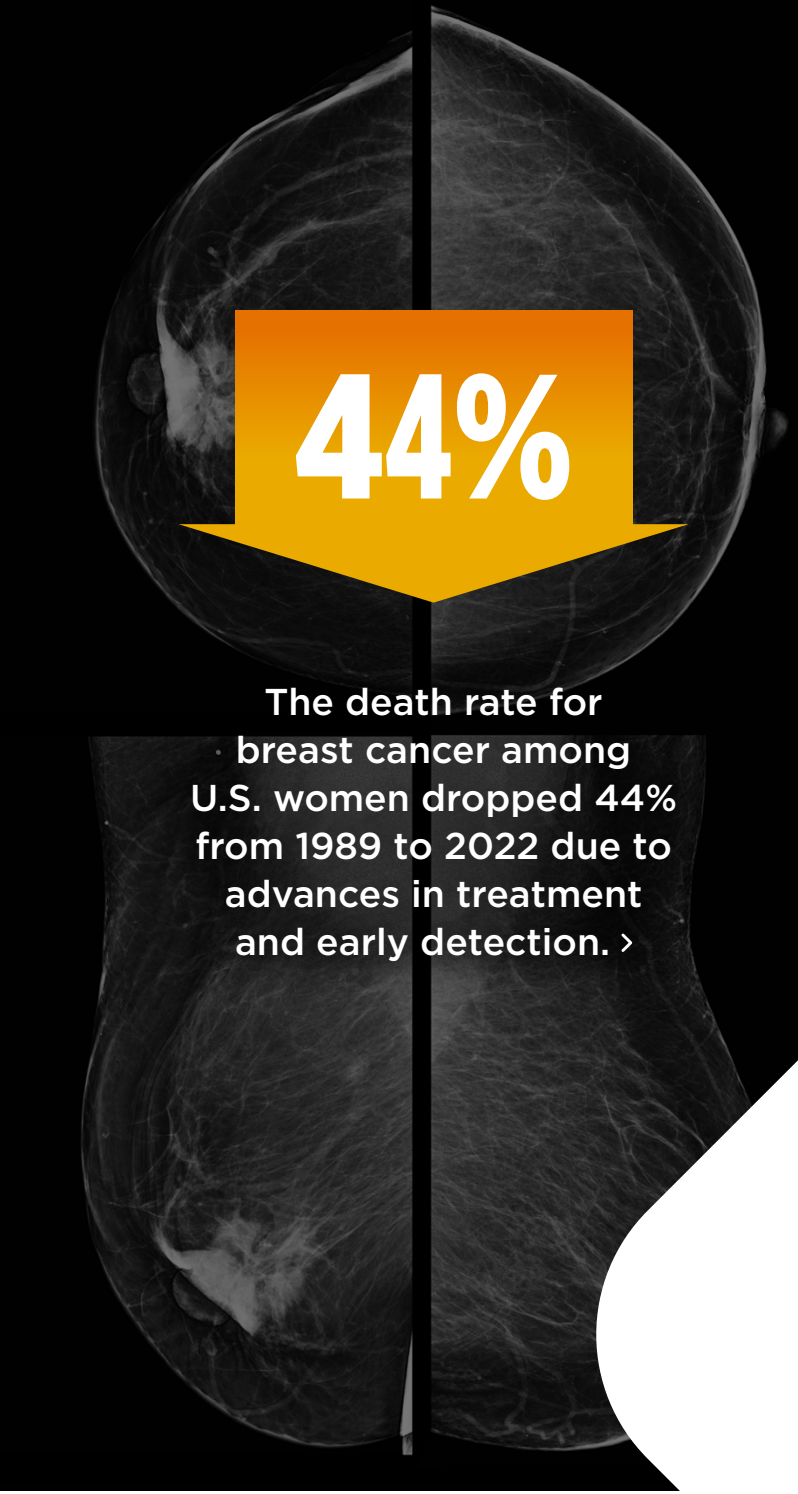
I have dedicated my career to two urgent questions: Why do young people die by suicide? And how can we prevent it? NIH support has made it possible for us to conduct rigorous, cutting-edge research that centers on the voices of youth and families most affected by suicide. We have uncovered critical insights into the risk and protective factors that shape suicidal behavior among vulnerable youth and have developed evidence-based interventions aimed at saving lives. Biomedical research funding drives the knowledge and tools we need to intervene before it’s too late.

Kirsty Clark ›
Assistant Professor of Medicine, Health and Society
Nashville, TN

I'm a researcher backed by the NIH Director's Early Independence Award (DP5). My work launched the first prospective cohort study to investigate how living near oil and gas sites might affect reproductive health. This NIH funding has been instrumental, enabling me to rapidly advance into a faculty position and enhance both the timeliness and impact of my research. Without support from the NIH, we cannot pursue the research needed to fill an important knowledge gap and find the best ways to keep communities safe and healthy.

Mary Willis >
Assistant Professor of Epidemiology
Boston, MA

38% of NIH grants cut between January and June 2025 were for research training and career development grants. >



44%

The death rate for breast cancer among U.S. women dropped 44% from 1989 to 2022 due to advances in treatment and early detection. ›

“When I was an NIH-supported scholar, I learned that the treatment my mom was undergoing for breast cancer was developed by NIH-supported researchers. Today, she is a 12-year cancer survivor. I believe that every American has benefited from the outcome of NIH-sponsored research at some point in their lives — whether that be with new drugs to treat a current illness or new procedures to prevent disease (such as mammograms).”

Steven Townsend ›
Professor of Chemistry
Nashville, TN

NIH funding has shaped every stage of my career — giving me the training, resources, and opportunities to explore bold ideas and build technologies that improve health and quality of life. One of my proudest accomplishments was developing a new way to amplify and detect DNA and RNA that was both more robust and less expensive than traditional methods.

NIH funding consistently multiplies in value — not only driving discoveries, but fueling the economy, creating jobs, and improving health for millions of people. Continued investment is one of the smartest, most impactful commitments our nation can make.

Nick Adams ›
Research & Development Scientist and Innovation Leader
Pleasanton, CA

Every $1 the U.S. government invested in the Human Genome Project returned $141 in economic output. ›

What's at Stake

The consequences of cutting NIH research are real. Cuts will profoundly affect the health of people we love, halt momentum against our most devastating and chronic diseases, and have a significant, negative impact on innovation and the economy.

“”

NIH funding is not an expenditure — it is an immeasurable investment in the health and prosperity of our nation: longer, healthier lives, reduced healthcare costs, and global leadership in biomedical innovation. Cutting funding today means delaying cures, slowing progress, and placing a greater burden on future generations. A robust, well-funded NIH ensures that research does not stagnate but accelerates, delivering solutions for the pressing health challenges we face.

Roy Jensen ›
Vice Chancellor for Research
Kansas City, KS

“”

The current climate is devastating our field, most notably by removing opportunities for the next generation of scientists. Investing in science and technology has made the United States a leader. It leads to amazing advances in disease prevention and treatment and fuels the economy of my state, North Carolina. All of this is at stake — do we want to turn over leadership to China?

Mark Peifer ›
Professor of Biology
Chapel Hill, NC

Medical innovation is an ecosystem, much like the ocean. NIH funding is the oxygen that makes it work.

Rick Silva, Houston, TX >

HELP KEEP **NIH** STRONG

See more stories and share your WHY

UNITEDFORMEDICALRESEARCH.ORG/MY-WHY