

LETTER OF INTENT
between the
NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (NIH)
and
THE RESEARCH COUNCIL OF NORWAY (RCN)

April 2010

The Research Council of Norway and the National Institutes of Health of the United States of America (hereafter: the Participants) share an interest in fostering collaborative biomedical and health research of excellent standards. Recognizing the Agreement on Science and Technology Cooperation between the Government of the Kingdom of Norway and the Government of the United States of America, the Participants intend to pursue common goals and interests in research and training of the next generation of scientists.

The Participants' intentions are to:

1. Establish long-term relations between Norwegian and US scientists, in order to perform medical and health research of excellent standards.
2. Build long-term collaborations in science between the NIH institutes and Norwegian universities and other institutions within medical research and education.
3. Explore and support collaboration and research projects in specific fields of mutual interest.

The Participants intend to increase their common efforts in addressing major challenges within biomedical and health research. There are a number of areas of mutual interest, among them research based on utilizing data from biobanks, health registries and population cohort studies, in order to reveal risk factors, causes and disease mechanisms of common somatic and mental disorders. Other fields of medical research may be identified and explored for possible collaborative projects and mutual agreements. Molecular medicine, neuroscience, medical imaging and translational research are examples of such topics.

The strengths of NIH range from comprehensive outstanding basic biomedical research to excellence in clinical research. The 27 institutes offer advanced resources and facilities, and the grant programs represent networks and centers of excellence in all biomedical and clinical fields, and all US regions.

Unique Norwegian resources include biobanks and comprehensive public health registries. Four universities with medical schools, university hospitals and the Norwegian Institute of Public Health constitute a national comprehensive system. Centers of excellence represent strong research groups ranging from molecular medicine and stem cells to neuroscience, cancer and translational medicine.

Norwegian biobanks represent a potential world-class research resource, by linking data from biobanks and health registries with health data from population studies. This enables researchers to gain a better understanding of the causes and course of widespread diseases such as cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and mental disorders. Many of these large,

population-based health studies follow the same individuals over a long time period and record risk factors, disease and cause of death. Blood samples and biological material are stored in biobanks in new computerized facilities. The framework for these types of studies is excellent in Norway and other Nordic countries, due to a comprehensive public health service, good health registries and a personal identification number making it possible to link data from several sources. Materials from the biobanks have relevance in all aspects of medical research, including environmental health issues.

The Director General of the Norwegian Institute of Public Health is strongly supportive of measures and instruments to promote increased collaboration between Norwegian institutions and the NIH.

Joint U.S.-Norwegian cooperative activities may include

- a) joint cooperative projects,
- b) exchange of scientists, at the postdoctoral level and PhD students, including encouraging young Norwegian scientist to pursue a postdoctoral career at the NIH, by applying for the NIH Visiting Fellowship Program,
- c) exchange of data and biological samples, within the limitations of law and regulation in the Participants' countries,
- d) convening of joint scientific conferences, workshops and similar meetings for scientific planning and support of ongoing research collaborations,
- e) other joint activities, as agreed upon by the Participants.

In case of joint projects or other joint activities, the Participants and other participating institutions intend to cover their own expenses, however, other models for funding may be agreed upon in specific cases provided that they are consistent with applicable laws, regulations and policies governing the Participants.

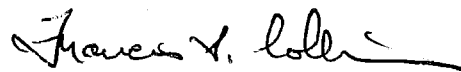
In order to increase the number of Norwegian applications to the NIH Visiting Fellowship Program, the RCN intends to offer additional support for Norwegian participants (such as travel costs and living expenses while staying in the US).

Nothing in this Letter of Intent precludes either Party from making the contents public. Activities under this Letter of Intent are to be conducted subject to the applicable governing laws, policies, and regulations, and the availability of funds, personnel and other resources of the Participants. With this Letter of Intent the Participants recognize that collaboration can contribute to important new knowledge and stimulate excellent research. The signing of this Letter of Intent encourages scientists and administrators in both countries to work towards these goals.

This Letter of Intent becomes effective upon signature of both Participants and will remain in effect for five years. The Participants may extend or modify it by mutual written declaration.



Arvid Hallén
Director General
The Research Council of Norway



Francis Collins
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