**Elevate Rehabilitation Science at the National Institutes of Health (NIH)**

On March 19, 2015, Senators Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Michael Bennet (D-CO) introduced bipartisan legislation to improve, coordinate, and enhance medical rehabilitation research at the NIH (Enhancing the Stature and Visibility of Medical Rehabilitation Research at the NIH Act ([S.800](https://www.congress.gov/114/bills/s800/BILLS-114s800is.pdf))). On March 25, Reps. Jim Langevin (D-RI) and Gregg Harper (R-MS) introduced a companion bill of the same name in the House ([H.R. 1631](https://www.congress.gov/114/bills/hr1631/BILLS-114hr1631ih.pdf)). The Senate bill currently has two cosponsors, Senators Hatch (R-UT) and Murkowski (R-AK). The legislation 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 Kennedy Shriver National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). Rehabilitation research is critical for a growing number of Americans with disabling conditions across the age spectrum. The Act addresses:

* ***Coordination***: Focuses on building 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.
* ***Elevation of Stature within NIH***: Involves the Office of the NIH Director in coordination activities, raising the stature of rehabilitation science across NIH’s 27 Institutes and Centers.
* ***Updating the Research Plan***: Calls for a Rehabilitation Research Plan to be updated every five years following a scientific conference. The existing research plan dates back to 1993.
* ***Accountability***: 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.

This legislation has been fully vetted with NIH officials, rehabilitation research organizations, clinical associations and disability/consumer groups and is not expected to have a budgetary impact.

**The AAPM&R, in conjunction with 30 other organizations comprising the Disability and Rehabilitation Research Coalition (DRRC), urges Congress to:**

* **Cosponsor the Kirk/Bennet rehabilitation research legislation (S. 800);**
* **Cosponsor the Langevin/Harper companion bill in the House (H.R. 1631); and**
* **Encourage NIH to implement as many recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel Report on Medical Rehabilitation Research as possible on its own authority.**

**For more information, contact:**

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