

PROTECT FEDERAL REHABILITATION AND DISABILITY RESEARCH PROGRAMS

More than 61 million Americans live with disabling conditions such as traumatic brain injury (“TBI”), stroke, spinal cord injury, limb loss, and other complex conditions. Millions more experience temporary or long-term disabilities from injuries, illnesses and chronic conditions. As the U.S. population ages and the prevalence of disabilities and chronic conditions rises, the demand for high-quality, evidence-based medical rehabilitation continues to increase.

Physiatrists—physicians specializing in physical medicine and rehabilitation—depend on federal research investments to develop and deliver innovative, effective, and cost-saving care. Without sustained funding, we risk delaying scientific advances and limiting access to high-quality rehabilitation care for individuals with injuries, illnesses, and disabilities. Federal programs housed at the following federal agencies are leading the nation’s efforts to prevent injury, improve rehabilitation and functional outcomes, and advance innovative rehabilitation science:

- National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR)
- National Center for Medical Rehabilitation Research (NCMRR) at the National Institutes of Health (“NIH”)
- Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program’s (CDMRP) at the Department of Defense (DOD)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

NIDILRR

Within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), NIDILRR drives community-based, person-centered research focused on health and function, employment, and independent living. NIDILRR’s Model Systems for TBI, spinal cord injury, and burn injury are the gold standard in rehabilitation research, generating longitudinal data, testing clinical interventions, and developing tools that directly inform standards of care. NIDILRR’s Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers and Rehabilitation Engineering Centers focus on improving treatments, developing assistive devices and technologies, and translating research into improvements in care for people with disabilities. NIDILRR’s research advances opportunities for people with disabilities to return to work and to live as independently as possible, bedrock bipartisan goals of the disability population. NIDILRR also chairs the Interagency Committee on Disability Research (ICDR) which coordinates efforts with other federal agencies focused on different aspects of rehabilitation and disability science.

NCMRR at NIH

The NCMRR coordinates over \$900 million annually in rehabilitation research across NIH and supports cutting-edge basic, clinical, and translational research to restore function and independence. From brain-computer interface systems to pediatric therapies and post-stroke interventions, NCMRR’s

work enhances the lives of people with disabilities and strengthens patient outcomes of medical rehabilitation. Despite the broad reach and urgent need for rehabilitation research, NCMRR represents a small fraction of NIH's overall budget. Sustained investment will accelerate scientific discoveries that improve patient outcomes and reduce long-term disability; enhance coordination of rehabilitation research across NIH; and support interdisciplinary research that addresses the complex needs of individuals with disabilities. NCMRR's coordination role is intended to maximize the return on investment at NIH.

CDMRP at DOD

CDMRP has contributed to significant advances in knowledge pertaining to treatment options in TBI, spinal cord injury, limb loss, as well as a long list of combat-related injuries and illnesses. CDMRP funding is congressionally-directed and not part of the President's annual budget. This funding has provided a foundation for evidence-based and clinically-informed decisions across military and civilian populations. The FY 2025 Continuing Resolution cut the CDMRP budget by an astounding 57%. **Cutting funding to this agency compromises the entire rehabilitation research infrastructure at DOD**, delaying scientific breakthroughs, eroding clinical tools for physiatrists and rehabilitation professionals, and reducing access to cost-effective, evidence-based interventions that promote healing, rehabilitation, return to service or employment, long-term independence, and community participation.

CDC Injury Prevention and TBI Programs

CDC TBI programs provide national surveillance, public education, and prevention strategies targeting high-risk populations, such as youth athletes, older adults, and service members.

- HEADS UP is a campaign equipping healthcare providers, schools, and families with critical resources to recognize, prevent, and manage concussions.
- CDC also supports falls prevention through the STEADI initiative and collects vital data to inform injury prevention policy and clinical care.
- The CDC tracks TBI incidence and trends through data systems such as the National Vital Statistics System and the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project.

AAPM&R Asks Congress To:

- ✓ **Protect federal funding for rehabilitation and disability research** programs at NIDILRR, NCMRR, DOD and CDC.
- ✓ **Ensure continued coordination and innovation** across federal agencies to meet the needs of people with disabilities, prevent duplication, and maximize the return on federal investments in these areas.
- ✓ **Support evidence-based, cost-effective rehabilitation research** that improves health, function, long-term outcomes, return to work, independent living, and community participation.