

SPINAL CORD INJURY RESEARCH BOARD

Regular Business Meeting

October 10, 2025

10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

DRAFT AND UNADOPTED

Location

NYS DOH, Wadsworth Center, Biggs Laboratory, Sturman Conference Room, Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY
NYS DOH, Metropolitan Area Regional Office, Conference Room 4A-B, 90 Church Street, New York, NY
University at Buffalo, Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, 955 Main Street, 3rd Floor, 3256

SCIRB Members Present

Adam B. Stein, MD, Chair
April B. Coughlin, PhD
Jessica K. Daigle, MA, OTR/L
Keith Gurgui
Shelly Hsieh, MD
Lorne Mendell, PhD
Avinash Mohan, MD
Ramin Rak, MD, FAANS
Rachel Santiago, MD
Fraser J. Sim, PhD
Lauren A. Varriale, MS, OTR/L
Anne Spungen Ed.D.

NYS DOH Staff Present

Alana Buscher, Executive Secretary
Farrah M. O'Brien
David Googins
Alexa Nagy

Members of the Public

Chung-Ying Tsai
Jill Wecht
Noam Harel
Monique Rease
Jason Carmel
Edmund Hollis

CALL TO ORDER, WELCOME MEMBERS & OPENING REMARKS

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 a.m. with a welcome by Chair, Adam B. Stein, M.D.

Board Membership Updates

Dr. Stein introduced himself and welcomed the newest SCIRB member, Anne Spungen, who introduced herself to the Board. Board members and DOH staff introduced themselves. Dr. Stein also thanked Dr. Mendell who is leaving the Board after this meeting.

Dr. Stein advised that there were two (2) vacant seats on the SCIRB, with one (1) of those seats to be filled by Governor Kathy Hochul and one (1) to be filled by Speaker of the Assembly Carl Heastie.

Board Member Recruitment

Dr. Stein said that it is extremely important to fill the remaining vacancies with new experts and advocates as quickly as possible so the SCIRB can continue its mission to find a cure for spinal cord injuries and approve applications of merit for awards.

Dr. Stein asked that current SCIRB members forward any recommendations of potential SCIRB members to Department of Health staff, or to the legislative leadership that has vacancies to fill.

Consideration of April 10, 2025, Meeting Minutes

Dr. Stein asked the SCIRB to consider Exhibit 1, the minutes from the April 11, 2025, meeting. Dr. Stein reminded the Board that Dr. Spungen must abstain from voting on the previous minutes as she was not a member at the time of the meeting. He also noted that as Dr. Spungen's location was not listed on the meeting notice that she would abstain from voting.

ACTION

Dr. Rak made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Dr. Mohan seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the minutes were approved (11-0-1).

Public Comment

No requests to make public comment were received by the due date/time.

ACTION

Dr. Mendell moved to adjourn into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing the applications received in response to the Translational Round 7 applications and other discussions. Dr. Hsieh seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved (11-0-1).

After discussion, the SCIRB reconvened in Public Session.

SCIRB vote on Translational Research Projects (Round 7) Applications

In summary, the SCIRB recommended to forward two (2) applications for funding using the peer review results as the basis for the decision.

ACTION

A vote was held on the Translational application under consideration submitted by Dr. Carmel of Columbia University. A roll call vote was taken, and the application was approved with Dr. Spungen abstaining (11-0-1).

ACTION

A vote was held on the Translational application under consideration submitted by Dr. Agrawal of the Columbia University. A roll call vote was taken, and the application was approved with Drs Mohan and Spungen abstaining (10-0-2).

No further applications were voted on as the available funding was exhausted with the approval of these two applications.

New PI RFA

A vote was held with the intent to fund a new RFA with the goal of attracting new PIs to the SCIRB program; Dr. Rak moved, and Dr. Hsieh seconded. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was approved (11-0-1)

DOH PROGRAM UPDATE

Ms. O'Brien provided an update on the status of other program activities and previously awarded contracts:

- The DOH peer review contract with the American Institute for Biological Sciences (AIBS) continues and ends March 31, 2026. An RFP for new peer review services was released on July 30, 2025, and applications were due September 24, 2025. The resulting contract will begin on April 1, 2026.
- One (1) PART and seven (7) of the eight (8) IDEA (Round 4) contracts began in November 2021. These multi-year contracts ended in October 2023 (IDEA) and October 2024 (PART). One (1) of the eight (8) IDEA has been extended and will end this month.
- Four (4) PART and five (5) of the nine (9) IDEA (Round 5) contracts began in October 2022. These multi-year contracts ended in September 2024 (IDEA) or will end in September 2025 (PART). One (1) PART has been extended and will end in September 2026.
- Four (4) PART and four (4) IDEA (Round 6) contracts began in October 2023. These multi-year contracts will end in September 2025 (IDEA) or September 2026 (PART).
- Two (2) awards from Translational Research Projects (Round 4) began October 2022 and will end in September 2027.
- Eight (8) awards from Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowships (Round 5) began September 2023 and will end in August 2025.
- Thirteen (13) awards from Institutional Support (Round 7) began July 2023 and will end in June 2028.

Future Meeting & Adjournment

At its next meeting, April 10, 2026, the SCIRB will consider applications from the to be released Fellowship Round 7 RFA. Dr. Stein thanked members of the SCIRB and DOH staff for attending. The business meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.