August 19, 2015

Electronically Submitted

Martha J. Somerman, D.D.S., Ph.D.
Director
National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research
National Institutes of Health
Bethesda, MD 20892

RE: National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research
Comments on Proposed Research Initiatives Fiscal Year 2017

Dear Dr. Somerman:

I write on behalf of the American Dental Education Association (ADEA),¹ to provide input as the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR) considers research initiatives for fiscal year (FY) 2017.

ADEA applauds NIDCR’s efforts to identify research themes that will strengthen the understanding of oral health and capitalize on emerging opportunities in biomedical research. The proposed themes highlight the broad range of research that can be investigated in oral, dental and craniofacial research, including health disparities, technology, personalized medicine, and translational genetics and genomics. With continued investments to train and enhance a diverse and well-trained cadre of investigators, these themes will inspire crosscutting, multidisciplinary research capable of advancing cutting-edge discoveries.

It is understood that several factors were considered when developing the research themes, including the budgetary climate, past research themes, and alignment with the current NIDCR 2015-2019 Strategic Plan. ADEA is aware that these themes are not encompassing NIDCR’s entire research portfolio, but rather offer a way to highlight NIDCR’s future research goals.

Below we provide comments on two NIDCR research initiatives, which we believe hold enormous promise in oral and craniofacial research, training, and application in our health care system.

¹The American Dental Education Association is “The Voice of Dental Education.” Its members include all 66 U.S. dental schools and many allied and advanced dental education programs, corporations, deans, program directors, administrators, faculty and students, residents and fellows. The mission of ADEA is to lead institutions and individuals in the dental education community to address contemporary issues influencing education, research and the delivery of oral health care for the overall health and safety of the public.
- **Factors Underlying Differences in Female and Male Incidence Rates for Certain Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Diseases**

ADEA encourages specific language to be included in the proposed research initiative “Factors Underlying Differences in Female and Male Incidence Rates for Certain Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Diseases." This initiative has the potential to provide a better understanding of the factors that influence sex-related differences for incidence rates observed in dental, oral and craniofacial diseases and conditions. Research has demonstrated that the health disparity between males and females depends on the complexity of biological, social and behavioral factors, and therefore we recommend the proposed research initiative explicitly include behavioral and social factors as areas of research.

The existing NIDCR behavioral and social sciences research portfolio includes diseases and conditions with established sex-related differences such as orofacial pain and oral and pharyngeal cancer treatment. This research initiative can encourage investigators to design studies to explore gender differences, provide important clues of the gender effect susceptibility for certain oral diseases, improve genome and immune surveillance, and ultimately, lead to more effective patient-specific care.

- **Data Sharing for Glycoprofiling HIV and HIV/AIDS-related Oral Pathogens that Persist During Antiretroviral Therapy Initiative**

Lastly, ADEA would like to stress the importance of incorporating a data sharing strategy for the research initiative “Glycoprofiling HIV and HIV/AIDS-related Oral Pathogens that Persist During Antiretroviral Therapy.” Cataloging can help develop new therapeutics and diagnostics based on a more in-depth understanding of the structure and role of glycans in HIV/AIDS and other opportunistic infections affecting the oral mucosa. ADEA recommends a data sharing and implementation strategy by investigators in order to realize the full potential of this research initiative. As stated in the NIH Data Sharing Policy, “data sharing is essential for expedited translation of research results into knowledge, products and procedures.” An electronic database that can be shared will benefit investigators, the scientific community and the public.

ADEA appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on these very important research themes; we look forward to sharing with our members NIDCR’s FY 2017 research initiatives once they are finalized.

Do not hesitate to let us know if we can be of further assistance in this regard. Please contact Yvonne Knight, J.D., ADEA Senior Vice President for Advocacy and Governmental Relations at knighty@adea.org.

Sincerely,

Richard W. Valachovic, D.M.D., M.P.H.
President and CEO