Purpose
The NIH Pain Consortium was established to enhance pain research and promote collaboration across the NIH Institutes and Centers that have programs and activities addressing pain.

Members
The consortium comprises 26 institutes, centers, and offices of the National Institutes of Health. Their coordinated efforts have broadened the scope and increased funding of pain research and elevated awareness of the public health significance of pain.

Challenges
The burden of chronic pain affects more than 100 million Americans, their families, caregivers, and our health care system. Clear diagnosis is often uncertain: improved diagnostic tools and biomarkers are needed. Treatment is not always effective: better understanding of individual variations in pain and treatment response is needed. Prescription rates of opioids have increased threefold in the past two decades, fueling an epidemic of opioid abuse and related deaths: development of novel non-addictive analgesics is needed. Integrated and appropriate treatment is not always available: evidence for effectiveness of interventions and multidisciplinary approaches is needed.

Activities
The consortium hosts events to promote collaboration among researchers and to highlight advances in pain research. It engages outside experts to identify key opportunities in pain research. The consortium members support initiatives that support a multidisciplinary and forward thinking research agenda. The consortium interacts with other government and private entities to promote the pain research agenda. Training of the next generation of pain researchers and education of health care providers are key elements of the consortium’s strategy to ease the burden of pain.

Goals
New knowledge through research can reduce the impact of pain and strengthen the nation’s public health. The NIH Pain Consortium recognizes that it is imperative to integrate research advances and move them into the clinic. To this end, the NIH Pain Consortium is pursuing the pain research agenda through partnerships, programs, and opportunities to support the best science and translate it to clinical practice.

For more information visit: http://painconsortium.nih.gov
This funding opportunity, supported by the NIH Pain Consortium brings pain researchers together with scientists whose primary expertise is in neuroplasticity, to develop new insights on how maladaptive changes in the nervous system induce and maintain chronic neuropathic pain. The projects awarded through the Grand Challenge will test the hypotheses that under challenges from nerve damage, alterations in numerous and varied nervous system structures and functions contribute to the transition from acute to chronic neuropathic pain:

- neural epigenetic mechanisms
- glial priming and glial signaling
- neuroimmune interactions
- sensory axon regeneration
- low-threshold mechanoreceptors in the skin
- specific sensory neuron signaling pathways
- emotional and motivational learning circuits

Chronic Low Back Pain

Purpose
Chronic low-back pain is a problem of enormous public health significance. Unfortunately, clinical research on chronic low-back pain suffers from inconsistent terminology, case definitions, and outcome measures. As a result, it is difficult to compare studies of various interventions, replicate findings, pool data from multiple studies, resolve conflicting conclusions, or develop consensus regarding interpretation of findings. The Chronic Low-Back Pain Research Task Force (RTF) has been convened, under the auspices of the NIH Pain Consortium, to address these issues.

Challenges
Chronic low-back pain is a complex problem with many potential etiologies, influenced by a variety of biological, physiological, and social factors. The RTF must engage a diverse array of professional and scientific disciplines, and other stakeholders. The RTF must carry out a comprehensive assessment of existing clinical research from many disciplines, and draft a set of research case definitions, diagnostic criteria, and outcome measures which utilize best available methods.

Goals
The goal of the RTF is creation of consistent standards for terminology, classification, data collection, and outcome assessment, to bring greater consistency to, and ultimately advance the state of clinical research on a challenging and complex problem.

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