

April 14, 2016

As a member of the Orthopaedic Research Society, and a constituent, I am seriously concerned about the limited funding available for health research into diseases of the musculoskeletal system. Musculoskeletal disorders include common dysfunctions of the skeleton, such as, back & neck pain, osteoarthritis (joint wear and tear), osteoporosis (weak/brittle bones), trauma, torn ligaments, and broken bones.

- Musculoskeletal disorders are the leading cause of disability worldwide.
- In the US musculoskeletal disorders affect 1 in 2 (50%) persons age 18 and over, and 3 out of 4 (75%) age 65 and over. (Figure 1)
- With the aging of the US population, musculoskeletal diseases are becoming a greater burden every year.
- In 2010 trauma surpassed cardiovascular disease as the leading healthcare cost burden in the US.
- Funding dollars to support musculoskeletal disease are greatly disproportional to other diseases with a lesser socioeconomic burden. (Figure 2)

The Orthopaedic Research Society is composed of basic scientists, engineers, surgeons and clinicians with a mission to advance musculoskeletal research worldwide. By actively researching musculoskeletal disorders and diseases from these different perspectives, we are discovering new treatments and identifying key triggers of disease processes. This collaborative, high-impact research allows us to develop new clinical interventions that benefit the nation's health and well-being. Additionally, our research has made huge gains in improving the quality of life for individuals in our country, enabling our citizens to return to the workforce after treatment of musculoskeletal disorders. The Orthopaedic Research Society has summarized six of the most important innovations that have come from our research efforts, how they have improved clinical outcomes, and why we need additional research funding (<http://www.ors.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Inside-Innovations-FINAL.pdf>).

Based on the urgent need for new cures for musculoskeletal disease, we hope we can count on your support. Today our members are visiting Capitol Hill as part of the Research Capitol Hill Days with the following request:

The orthopaedic community, comprised of physicians, researchers, and patients, urges Congress to appropriate **\$34.5 billion in fiscal year 2017 for the National Institutes of Health (NIH)**. Additionally, we recommend that Congress support the **Next Generation Researcher Act (S.2014/H.R.3466)**, to improve opportunities for new researchers, promote earlier research independence; strengthen mentorship programs, enhance diversity efforts, and help new researchers obtain renewal funding.

Sincerely,

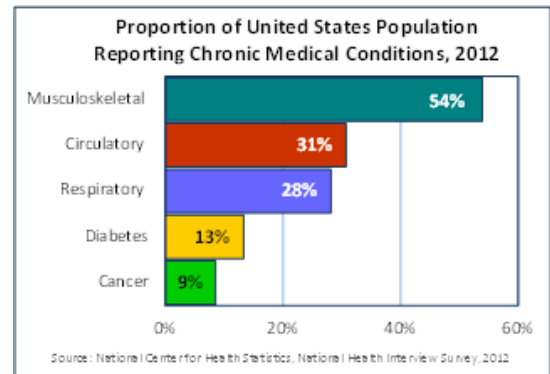


Figure 1. The proportion of individuals in the U.S. with chronic musculoskeletal medical conditions is more than 20% higher than circulatory conditions, such as heart disease, and respiratory conditions.

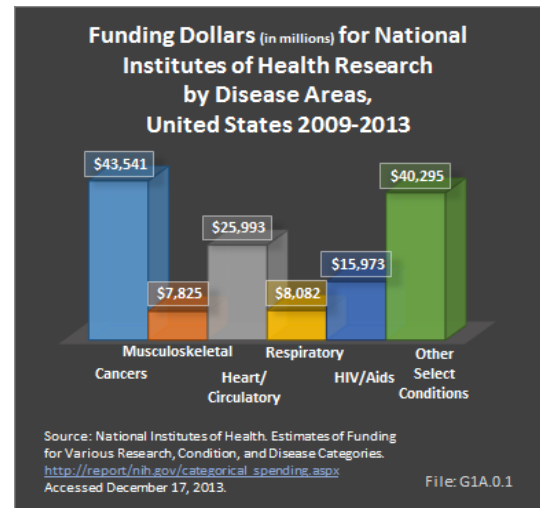


Figure 2. Research funding available from the National Institutes of Health for musculoskeletal disease is less than half of HIV/AIDS and 5 times less than the funding received for cancer research.