

The Honorable Elias A. Zerhouni
Director
National Institutes of Health
1 Center Drive, Room 126
Bethesda, MD 20892-0148

Dear Dr. Zerhouni,

We are writing to urge you to make Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) a higher priority at the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

As you know, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, also called Chronic Fatigue and Immune Dysfunction Syndrome, is a complex and debilitating illness that affects the brain and multiple body systems. Current research indicates that at least one million and as many as four million Americans suffer from this illness. Even more alarming, more than 80% of these individuals have not been diagnosed because there is no effective diagnostic test. Further, due to the lack of research resources, there is no single course of therapy or cure for the illness that has proven effective.

The increased prevalence of CFS and the alarming low rate of diagnosis – coupled with the fact that CFS can be as disabling as multiple sclerosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and end-stage renal failure – warrants greater federal investment in CFS research and education.

We understand that the Office of Portfolio Analysis and Strategic Initiatives (OPASI) was created to identify gaps in biomedical research that do not fit into one single institute at NIH, but instead are left to be covered by the agency as a whole. CFS is an ideal candidate for research funding offered through OPASI. As you know, CFS researchers are developing a better understanding of the multiple factors associated with CFS, including genetics, infectious agents, and other environmental factors, but more aggressive support from NIH, both intramurally and extramurally, is urgently needed.

We urge you to make CFS a priority for research funding so that we can better determine the cause of the disease to create effective treatments and find a cure.

Sincerely,

[Senator Harry Reid]
[Representative Jan Schakowsky]
[Representative Sue Myrick]