MAKING ONGOING AND INFORMED INVESTMENTS IN BIOMEDICAL AND HEALTH INFORMATICS RESEARCH

- Ongoing and sustained funding is essential for key Federal agencies conducting and supporting informatics research and innovation.
- AMIA believes that it is important to develop a coordinated biomedical informatics research strategy.

Who funds research and why it is essential. In order to gather a body of knowledge that will help the nation address critical issues of health and healthcare safety, quality and cost, a number of Federal agencies, including AHRQ, CDC, ONC, NIST, NLM and others, are funding multiple research projects in biomedical and informatics research, with the aim of driving innovation in information and knowledge management to improve health and healthcare. If the US is to continue to address current and future challenges in health care delivery, patient health outcomes, population health, and healthcare costs, these efforts require ongoing and sustained funding. AMIA strongly supports the President’s budget request for AHRQ, CDC, ONC, NIST, NLM and other agencies as providing absolutely necessary funding for critical research.

Types of research. Informatics researchers develop, introduce, and evaluate new methods in diverse areas such as data mining (deriving new knowledge from large databases), natural language or text processing, cognitive science, human interface design, decision support, databases, and algorithms for analyzing large amounts of data generated in public health, clinical research, or genomics. Research also investigates and supports reasoning, modeling, simulation, experimentation and translation across the spectrum from molecules to individuals to populations, from biological to social systems, bridging basic and clinical research and practice. Informatics research also helps assess and evaluate the adoption, use, and evidence of resulting from technologies and treatments.

Benefit of a coordinated biomedical informatics research strategy. To assure appropriate use of limited resources, the US needs consensus on which questions and areas are priorities, so that funding agencies can effectively evaluate proposals within the context of national needs, and reduce redundant efforts, while encouraging more widespread dissemination of best practices and lessons learned. Without a clear prioritization, funding will continue to be scattered and resolution of urgent questions delayed due to a lack of focus.

AMIA believes Congress should direct the Secretary of HHS to convene a meeting of agency, academic, and industry informaticians and other experts to: 1) Assess the current state of biomedical and health informatics research; and 2) Work toward development of a national strategy for the funding of such research.