



THE RIGHT TO RESEARCH COALITION  
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[www.righttoresearch.org](http://www.righttoresearch.org) | Access to research is a student [right](#)

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The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius  
Secretary of Health and Human Services  
Office of the Secretary, United States Department of Health and Human Services  
Hubert H. Humphrey Building  
200 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 120F  
Washington, DC 20201  
Via email: [kathleen.sebelius@hhs.gov](mailto:kathleen.sebelius@hhs.gov)

April 14, 2011

Dear Secretary Sebelius,

On behalf of the nearly seven million students represented by the Right to Research Coalition, an alliance of 34 undergraduate and graduate student organizations from all academic disciplines that promote open, free access to academic research, I'm writing to express our strong support for public access to taxpayer-funded research. We ask that you consider making all articles resulting from research funded by the Department of Health and Human Services openly available in a timely manner.

Academic research is crucial to the education of students in the health sciences and related fields. Journal articles are the raw materials of our education. They are the building blocks we use to form our understanding of a given field from its core to the cutting edge. When access to these resources is restricted, students' educations suffer, reflecting only that information which is available rather than what is necessary for a complete, up-to-date education.

Unfortunately, students' access to the results of research is more threatened now than ever. With journal prices continuing to rise and many libraries facing continuing budget cuts, students are forced to base their education on an ever-narrowing fraction of the scholarly record, even at universities among the most well funded in the world. Furthermore, students' professors only have access to the same subset of material and cannot teach what they cannot read, meaning inaccessible articles never find their way into the classes in which they should be taught.

However, as one of the largest funders of academic research, the Department of Health and Human Services has the ability to open these crucial resources to all students, all researchers, and the public at large. This month marks the third anniversary of the tremendously successful National Institutes of Health public access policy. By simply requiring NIH-funded researchers to



deposit their final peer-reviewed manuscript within 12 months of publication, this policy has played a central role in populating the PubMed Central (PMC) digital archive with more than two million articles on the latest biomedical research. PMC now sees nearly half a million unique users every day and has become a crucial resource for biomedical students, often providing them with articles to which they would not have otherwise had access.

While the NIH policy has proven extremely effective in getting research into the hands of those who need it, it only covers one portion of the DHHS' research program. Other DHHS divisions, such as the CDC, AHRQ, and FDA, fund equally important research in fields that also have students struggling for access to the latest research. Extending the NIH policy to cover all DHHS funded research would greatly enrich the educations of students in the United States and around the world. As healthcare continues to become more evidence-based and rely more heavily on cutting edge techniques, making all DHHS funded research available to all students is a direct investment in America's future. Expanding students' access to cutting-edge research will help ensure they can enter the workforce and hit the ground running rather than having to play catch up in learning the current state of their field.

Extending the NIH policy, with its proven track record of success, to the rest of the DHHS is a straightforward way the United States government can ensure students have the complete, up-to-date education that our modern healthcare system requires. We thank you for your consideration and continued leadership on this issue of vital importance to students. If we can provide you with any additional details, please don't hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

Nick Shockey  
Director, Right to Research Coalition

cc: Thomas Frieden  
Carolyn M. Clancy  
Margaret Hamburg



### **About the Right to Research Coalition:**

Founded by students in the summer of 2009, the Right to Research Coalition is an international alliance of 34 undergraduate and graduate student organizations, representing nearly 7 million students, that promotes a more open scholarly publishing system. The Right to Research Coalition believes that no student should be denied access to the scholarly articles they need, because they or their institution cannot afford access. The coalition works to educate the next generation of scholars and researchers about Open Access and to advocate for policies at the campus, national, and international levels that expand access to the results of research. The members of the Right to Research Coalition include:

- The American Medical Student Association
- The American University Washington College of Law Student Bar Association
- California Institute of Technology Graduate Student Council
- The Canadian Federation of Students
- Columbia University Graduate Student Advisory Council
- Cornell University Graduate and Professional Student Assembly
- Dartmouth College Graduate Student Council
- The European Pharmaceutical Students' Association
- The Indian Medical Student Association
- The International Association for Political Science Students
- The International Federation of Medical Students' Associations
- Library and Information Science Student Association, Simmons College
- The Macedonian Medical Student's Association
- The Malta Medical Students' Association
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology Graduate Student Council
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology Undergraduate Association
- National Association of Graduate-Professional Students
- National Graduate Caucus of the Canadian Federation of Students
- Oberlin College Student Senate
- Oklahoma State University Graduate and Professional Student Government Association
- St. Olaf College Student Government Association
- Student Advocates for Graduate Education
- The Student Public Interest Research Groups
- Students for Free Culture
- Trinity University Association of Student Representatives
- Tufts Graduate Student Council
- Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy Student Council
- The United States Student Association
- Universities Allied for Essential Medicines
- University of Calgary Students' Academic Assembly
- University of California, San Diego Graduate Student Association
- University of Minnesota Graduate and Professional Student Assembly
- University of Nebraska - Lincoln Graduate Student Association
- University of Tennessee - Knoxville Student Government Association