



*Promoting the Practice and Profession of Statistics®*

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April 29, 2015

Francis Collins, MD  
Director, National Institutes of Health  
31 Center Drive  
Bethesda, MD 20892

Dear Director Collins,

We're delighted to hear of NIH's many efforts to advance President Obama's Precision Medicine Initiative (PMI). As a professional society whose membership includes many experts working in personalized medicine, we see great potential in this area and are glad to hear of the administration's efforts to advance this important work.

Given the many statistical challenges in personalized medicine and important work statisticians are doing, we hope the NIH will engage the statistical community in its PMI work just as vigorously as it engages members of other scientific disciplines. For example, we urge a statistician be appointed to NIH's newly formed external working group on precision medicine. As the science of learning from data, statistics has much to provide to all stages of research. We especially emphasize the importance of engaging statisticians as scientific collaborators at the earliest stages of a scientific undertaking. For this reason, we believe it is important to have a statistician on this working group, to ensure the statistical perspective is fully represented at this planning stage.

While we know you understand the invaluable contributions of statisticians to biomedical research, allow us to provide one datum that statistics advances scientific research. In *Nature's* list of the 100 most-cited research articles ever, nine were written by statisticians and two more were heavily statistical (<http://www.nature.com/news/the-top-100-papers-1.16224>).

The American Statistical Association would be pleased to help identify a statistician for this group and otherwise assist the NIH with its PMI efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David Morganstein'.

David Morganstein  
President, American Statistical Association

CC: Lawrence Tabak, Deputy Director, NIH; Richard Lifton, Co-Chair, Precision Medicine Initiative Working Group (PMIWG); Bray Patrick-Lake, Co-Chair, PMIWG; Kathy Hudson, Co-Chair, PMIWG and Deputy Director of NIH Science, Outreach, and Policy