

Senate Report 109-103

DEPARTMENTS OF LABOR, HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, AND EDUCATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATION BILL, 2006

Office of the Director

Since fiscal year 1998, the Committee has highlighted the need for research on the prevalence, causes and treatment of vulvodynia, a painful and often debilitating disorder of the female reproductive system. The Committee is pleased that some progress has been made since that time. For example, the NICHD has supported a major study of the prevalence of this disorder. The published results of this study found that as many as 6 million women suffer from vulvodynia, making it one of the most prevalent chronic pain conditions affecting women. The Office of Research on Women's Health [ORWH] was crucial in supporting an important 2003 research conference on vulvodynia. These efforts have both clearly demonstrated the need for substantial additional research and served to heighten the research community's level of interest in studying vulvodynia. The Committee calls upon the Director to build upon these initial successes by coordinating through the ORWH an expanded and collaborative extramural and intramural research effort into the causes of and treatments for vulvodynia. This expanded effort should involve ORWH, NICHD, NINDS and other relevant ICs as well as the NIH Pain Consortium. In addition, the Committee notes that as many as 40 percent of women with vulvodynia remain undiagnosed after visiting three or more physicians. **To address this shortcoming, the Committee urges that NIH include information about vulvodynia on its website and that it work with the National Vulvodynia Association, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and other relevant groups to implement a national education program for primary care health professionals, patients and the general public on vulvodynia's symptoms, diagnosis and treatment options.** Finally, the Committee encourages the Director to work with the Center for Scientific Review and ICs to ensure that experts in vulvodynia and related chronic pain and female reproductive system conditions are adequately represented on peer review panels.

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

The Committee commends NICHD for its commitment to chronic pain conditions including vulvodynia. This condition has profound impacts on the health and quality of life for millions of women. As a result of efforts funded by NICHD, the number of high-quality researchers interested in research on vulvodynia has increased. NICHD is strongly encouraged to reissue its request for applications in this area and to fund high-quality applications, with a particular emphasis on etiology and multi-center therapeutic trials.

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

The recently published findings of NIH-supported research indicates that millions of women suffer from chronic pelvic and genitourinary pain conditions such as vulvodynia. Therefore, the Committee calls on NINDS to expand its support of research in this area, in coordination with NICHD, ORWH, the NIH Pain Consortium and other ICs, with a focus on etiology and multi-center therapeutic trials.