



July 15, 2019

Jill Escher
Escher Fund for Autism
1590 Calaveras Avenue
San Jose, CA 95126

Dear Ms. Escher:

Thank you for your follow-up letter about a research program on the adverse heritable impacts of general anesthesia. Having a proposal funded by NIH is extremely competitive. For example, in FY2018 (the last year reported), the success rate for R01 applications submitted to NICHD for potential funding was 19.9% ([NIH Research Portfolio Online Reporter Tools](#)). Success rates are defined as the percentage of reviewed grant applications that receive funding.

The competitive nature of the grant application process is highlighted by NIH's policy to allow multiple submissions of the proposed study. We don't want to stifle innovative and exciting proposals but rather ensure that, if funded, the studies would lead to non-incremental advances in a particular field. That is one reason we allow multiple submissions. Finally, I would add that even when NIH provides funds towards a particular research program, that is no guarantee that any application(s) submitted in response to the initiative would be funded. As stewards of federal funds, we try to ensure that only the best science is funded. All applications submitted to NIH go through two levels of review. First, applications are reviewed and evaluated for scientific and technical merit by an external peer review group. A second level of review is conducted by the funding institute's Advisory Council, which includes public representatives.

You mentioned an application that was 'rejected.' Even if an application is not funded, the investigator gets written critiques from (typically) three reviewers that outline their score-driving strengths and weaknesses of the proposal. If the application is discussed by the full study section panel, the investigator also will receive a summary of that discussion. For every application that is submitted to NIH, a Program Officer (PO) in the NIH institute designated for potential funding is assigned to the proposal. If the application is discussed, they listen to that discussion, either in person or on the phone. Once the investigator receives the written critiques, the PO is available to work with the investigator for a possible resubmission. The investigator should take advantage of the PO's expertise and experience in reshaping the proposal and responding to comments from the review panel before resubmission, which I urge them to do.

Thank you again for your continued interest in the research activities supported by NIH and NICHD.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diana W. Bianchi M.D." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Diana W. Bianchi, M.D.
Director, NICHD