



# FRIENDS OF NICHD COALITION

The Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development  
National Institutes of Health

## Statement of Mr. Emil Wigode, Chair

### DEPARTURE OF DR. DUANE ALEXANDER, NICHD DIRECTOR

On behalf of the over 100 organizations that belong to the Friends of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), I am writing to express our coalition's sentiments on the departure of Dr. Duane Alexander.

For over 20 years, Dr. Alexander has ably led the Institute through times of tremendous changes and challenges. Under his leadership, NICHD has evolved into one of the larger NIH components, managing a diverse and distinguished research portfolio with a budget exceeding \$1 billion. During his tenure, NICHD-funded research has generated numerous findings that are making a difference in the lives of mothers, children, and disabled people worldwide. Some of these advances include:

- Reducing the worldwide maternal transmission of HIV from 27% to 1.2%.
- Establishing the safety and accuracy of prenatal diagnosis using amniocentesis, now widely used to detect numerous genetic and metabolic disorders.
- Spearheading nationwide Back to Sleep Campaign, which has resulted in a 50% reduction in the U.S. rate of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.
- Development of a vaccine for Hib meningitis, once the leading cause of acquired mental retardation in the United States. Mental retardation from Hib has nearly been eliminated in the developed world.
- Uncovering the first safe and effective intervention to reduce the risk of preterm birth in high risk women.
- Discovering the powerful effects of environmental factors on children's and adolescent's behaviors, including obesity and tobacco use, and translating those into practical interventions.

Dr. Alexander devoted his scientific and professional career to NICHD and its mission of supporting research on the health of children, adults, families, and populations. The Friends of NICHD is grateful for his extraordinary service. While he will be missed at NICHD, we know the Global Health Initiative will benefit from his involvement and knowledge.

We wish Dr. Alexander the best of luck as he begins a new phase of his career and look forward to working with the Institute's new leadership.

*The Friends of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) is an independent coalition of over 100 organizations formed in the mid-1980's to support the important role of NICHD. Member organizations represent scientists, physicians, health care providers, patients, and parents concerned with the health and welfare of women, children, families, and people with disabilities.*