

Money Mayhem

Federal funding cuts at NIH impact over 74,000 clinical trial participants.

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In less than six months last year, the Trump administration terminated billions of dollars in grants to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), impacting 1 in 30 clinical trials and over 74,000 people enrolled in the medical studies, including cancer research, according to a report published in JAMA Internal Medicine.

A similar study, also in JAMA, found that 181 individual research grants funded by the National Cancer Institute, part of the NIH, were terminated in early 2025. (The NIH is one of several agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services, which is overseen by Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.)

Between the end of February and mid-August 2025, this first round of cuts to the NIH disrupted 383 studies testing treatments for cancer, heart disease, brain disease and more. In addition, of 11,008 ongoing trials, 3.5% lost funding during this time. Some of these studies had already completed collecting their data. Some have been delayed in hopes of finding alternate support. And yet others were still treating participants when funding ended. Trials that were active when the cuts hit had a total of 74,311 enrolled patients.

“Clinical trials aren’t light switches,” said Céline Gounder, MD, an editor-at-large for public health at KFF Health News and a CBS News medical contributor. “You can’t just flip them off without consequences. Cutting off funding mid-trial wastes research dollars and puts patients at risk. This is a breach of trust with every person who volunteers for research.”
