NIH Significance Section = So What?

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Aim for around two pages for this section in a 13-page R01.

Purpose of the section:
Answers the question “So what?” Beautiful experiments with great expertise and resources do not guarantee that the results will:

1. Potentially have a significant impact on human health, or
2. Matter to your peers.

Familiarize your reviewers with your field:
Customize the content. If reviewers are unfamiliar with your field, provide more information on basic biology, importance of the area, gaps, and new findings.
To determine expertise and potential biases of your reviewers, be sure to choose the study section and review the roster [here].

**Describe status quo:**
Tell the reviewers what is known and not known in your field, and why it matters. Give your expert evaluation of the gap (after all, who knows better? you are a national expert).

As background, for example, offer disease prevalence data and a short description of the morbidity. Cite relevant literature (not a comprehensive literature review) for background, progress, gaps, challenges, and importance of work in the field, along with a brief summary of your preliminary data.

**Describe how your work will advance the field:**
Include your long-term plans – where is this leading? Remember the word “impact.”

**Checkpoints:**
After conveying the significance of the research (in this and other parts of the application), check that:

- In the *Significance* section, I describe the importance of my hypothesis to the field (especially if my reviewers are not in it) and human disease.

- The application shows that I am aware of opportunities, gaps, roadblocks, and research underway in my field.

- I state how my research will advance my field, highlighting knowledge gaps and showing how my project fills one or more of them.