

Call for research proposals on psoriatic arthritis

Introduction

Psoriatic arthritis (PsA) is a particularly challenging rheumatic and musculoskeletal disease (RMD), not lastly based of its multi-domain nature combining disease manifestations from the joints, the entheses, the spine and the skin. While being in the shadow of rheumatoid arthritis for many years, scientific interest in PsA has gradually risen. This rapid development has been stimulated by the discovery of novel cytokine pathways that orchestrate inflammation in psoriatic skin and musculoskeletal disease. Despite these developments, current knowledge on the pathophysiology, clinical presentation and diagnosis & treatment of PsA is still limited. For instance, early disease is insufficiently characterized and not always recognized, interactions between the various organ manifestations of PsA are poorly defined and measuring disease activity and treatment responses still represents a major challenge. The Foundation for Research in Rheumatology FOREUM acknowledges these unmet needs and calls for innovative ideas and projects to increase our knowledge in PsA. FOREUM therefore announces a call on basic, translational and clinical research projects in PsA in order to instigate high-quality research in this severe and under-recognized disease in Europe.

Scope

In the PsA call, FOREUM seeks to support projects in the following areas:

- Studies that improve understanding of the pathophysiology of PsA and help to define the nature of its various disease manifestations
- Investigations that allow better characterization of the different disease stages (e.g. early disease) and subsets (e.g. oligoarticular disease) of PsA.
- Development of methods that help to define the disease course of PsA (e.g. residual disease activity, disease progression, damage, etc.)
- Concepts that improve the overall management of PsA patients (e.g. treat-to-target, comprehensive disease management, digital medicine)
- Approaches that foster the development and/or implementation of feasible and useful methods for comprehensively monitoring disease activity and the functional state of PsA patients

Eligibility

FOREUM primarily encourages collaboration across Europe and therefore requires multi-center project applications involving partners from at least three different countries. Any given institution shall be allowed to lead on only one application. However, that institution, or its staff may participate in other projects as collaborators. The call shall be open to participants from EULAR membership countries. Also, the Principal Investigator (MD or PhD) should come from a **EULAR membership country**. Centers from non- EULAR membership countries can participate as partners in exceptional cases (e.g. specific scientific expertise), but will not be eligible to receive research funding. Members of the FOREUM committees and EULAR Executive Committee are not allowed to submit or to participate in applications.

Budget

The PsA call is designed to fund a range of research projects. An individual proposal may be funded with up to a maximal amount of **600.000 Euro for a 3-year funding period**, provided the expenditure is appropriately justified. Collaborating partners should have a substantial part of the budget to appropriately conduct research. Projects will be subjected to an interim evaluation of progress and will have to offer a written final report. Submitted publications can be used as part of the report.

How to apply

Applications should be made electronically (email to info@foreum.org). Necessary application forms can be downloaded at www.foreum.org.

Letter of intent

All applicants considering submission of a proposal are invited to send a short 'scientific letter of intent' by 3 January 2021 to FOREUM (email to info@foreum.org) accompanied by a 'lay (non-scientific language for the general public) summary letter of intent', for review by patients. The structure and required content of the letter of intent are described in the 'Letter of intent template' available from www.foreum.org. Letters of intent should not only include information on the study question and its novelty, but also the agreement of the participating centers to collaborate in data analyses or to provide aggregated or raw data in line with national regulations and their governing boards. Letters of intent will be assessed by members of the FOREUM Scientific Committee.

Applications deemed meritorious of full application will be selected on a competitive basis. Please note that the lay summary is a critical part of our evaluation as the views of people with RMDs are central in our decision-making process. The Secretariat will respond by 15 February 2021 as to whether the proposal meets the scope, priority and requirements of the call such that a full application will be invited.

Full project proposal

Selected applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal; they will be sent the full project proposal template. To facilitate review by patients, additionally a lay summary must also be completed at this stage. Both forms will be provided to applicants invited to submit a full proposal. Full research proposals must be submitted electronically by 11 April 2021 to the FOREUM Secretariat.

Participation of patient research partners

Participation of patient research partners is strongly recommended for all research projects to provide experiential knowledge, with the aim of improving the relevance, quality and validity of the research process.

For more information, please read the material on

http://www.eular.org/pare_patient_research_partners.cfm

Evaluation and decision

The proposals will be independently peer-reviewed to evaluate their feasibility, novelty, design, relevance, and potential impact relative to the subject matter of the call. In addition, the involvement of patient-related research partners will be evaluated. Based on this peer review, the FOREUM Scientific Committee will make a funding recommendation to the FOREUM Executive Committee, which will make funding decisions in June 2021. Final decisions will be communicated by the FOREUM Secretariat by end of June 2021.

Ethical aspects

FOREUM expects a high standard in the conduct of research it funds. For researchers this includes scientific integrity and adherence to the principles of good research practice. Patients subjected to investigation shall be included with due adherence to the declaration of Helsinki.

Declaration of Interest forms will be completed by all successful applicants.

Management of the call

The FOREUM call and approval process will be administered by the FOREUM Secretariat, together with the FOREUM Scientific Committee.

Call timeline

Closing date for Letter of intent: 03 January 2021
Decisions on Letter of Intent: 15 February 2021
Closing date for full proposals: 11 April 2021
Decisions on full proposals announced: 28 June 2021

Inquiries

For general inquiries please contact the FOREUM Secretariat at info@foreum.org.