

SMA Europe

Call for SMA Research Projects 2010

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INTRODUCTION

SMA Europe is pleased to announce its third international Call for SMA Research Projects, following the successful Calls in 2008 and 2009.

This third Call for SMA Projects will be open to any research project aimed at finding a cure or therapy for Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA). Priority will, however, be given to projects concentrating on the following aspects/fields:

- a. Basic research
- b. Gene and/or Cell therapy
- c. Clinical trials
- d. Biomarkers and/or functional outcome measures
- e. Drug development

There is a desire for this Call for Projects to foster both international collaboration between SMA researchers and to address potential bottlenecks in the search for cures and therapies for SMA. Preference may be given to applicants who address these concerns.



Members:

Asociació Catalana de Enfermetats Neuromusculars (ASEM Catalunya) – **Spain**
Association Française contre les Myopathies (AFM) – **France**
Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Muskelkranke (DGM) – **Germany**

Famiglie SMA – **Italy**
Jennifer Trust for SMA – **United Kingdom**
The SMA Trust – **United Kingdom**
Vereniging Spierziekten Nederland (VSN) – **The Netherlands**

PROJECT SELECTION

The screening of applications in 2010 will be provided by a scientific advisory board under the direction of AFM (Association Française Contre les Myopathies). If applicants need further information regarding the process or the make up of the selection panels, please contact AFM at sma-europe@afm.genethon.fr

The final choice of projects to be funded will be selected by the representatives of the partner organisations, based on the recommendations made by the advisory board.

SMA Europe has no central secretariat, and the selected projects will be allocated to member organisations of SMA Europe for funding. Contractual and financial responsibility for a project will be taken directly by the member organisation(s) on behalf of SMA Europe.

APPLICATIONS

The application deadline for projects is **8 October 2010**

Two types of research grants will be awarded:

1. Operating Grants
2. Postdoctoral Fellowships

It is anticipated that notification of Awards will be made early in 2011 with funding to commence as soon as possible thereafter, subject to contracts being agreed between the relevant parties. It is recognised that time lines will be affected by project specifics, notably in the case of potential part or joint funding of a clinical trial.

In a change from previous years, grant applications should be made in the currency in which the applicant's institution would like to receive the grant, together with an equivalent amount in Euros. Payments to subsidiary institutions involved in the research must be made by the institution to which the grant award is made. SMA Europe cannot enter into contracts and agreements with partners involved in a project. However, where more than one currency is involved in one project, separate payment **may** be negotiated, if acceptable to the grant giving organisation.

Eligibility

To be eligible as principal investigator to apply for an **operating grant**, an individual should have the skills, knowledge and resources to carry out the proposed project and coordinate a multi-team project. A principal investigator:

1. must be a professional or faculty member at an appropriate educational, medical or research institution or SME (small or medium enterprise) biotech and be qualified to conduct and supervise a programme of original research;
2. must have access to institutional resources necessary to conduct the proposed research project;
3. must hold a Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Science or equivalent degree;
4. must have a track record of collaboration with others.

To be eligible to apply for a **postdoctoral fellowship**, an applicant:

1. must be a member of a research team in the laboratory of a senior investigator under whose guidance the applicant will conduct the research project;
2. must hold a Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Science or equivalent degree.

AWARDS

Awards are for up to two years. Under exceptional circumstances they can be for longer periods. Funding for a second year and beyond will depend on receiving a detailed and satisfactory annual report for consideration by members of the scientific advisory board.

Standard operating grants have no specific limitation but usually will not exceed €150,000 (or equivalent). Grants for part or joint funding of a clinical trial may be made at a higher level. Grants for Postdoctoral Fellowships must be within European norms. Advice will be sought over appropriate levels where grants are made in countries outside Europe.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

The application forms can be found on www.smaeurope.afm-france.org.

FOR STANDARD OPERATING GRANTS AND POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS PLEASE SEND:

by e-mail to sma-europe@afm.genethon.fr

- *1 electronic version of the application (2.0 Mb maximum, MS Word)*

by post before 1 October

- *1 signed original application form - The signatures of the Laboratory Director and of all the participants must appear on this application*
AND
- *20 copies, each set stapled*

to: Madame Claire Legrand-Tabary
SMA-EUROPE
c/o AFM - SP du CS
Bâtiment Risler
Groupe Hospitalier Pitié-Salpêtrière
47-83, Boulevard de l'Hôpital
75651 PARIS CEDEX 13
France

Tél. : 33 (0)1 42 16 96 60
Fax : 33 (0)1 42 16 96 65

THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Each project will be peer-reviewed according to the following criteria:

1. Relevance and Significance for SMA;
2. Project quality / scientific soundness;
3. Innovation;
4. Feasibility (i.e., investigator, environment, approach);
5. The reasonableness of the budget.

1. Relevance and significance for SMA: how is this research relevant to a better understanding of SMA, its causes, cure and/or prevention? Does this study address an important problem? Is there a sufficient body of high quality fundamental, preclinical or clinical research that supports the rationale for the proposed study? What is the potential impact of the proposed intervention on health care and quality of life?

2. Project quality/ Scientific soundness: Are the rationale and experimental design adapted to the study objectives?

3. Innovation: Are the aims of the study original? Does the proposed study design represent advancement in the field? Does the project advance international cooperation in the field?

4. Feasibility: Are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, and appropriate to the aims of the project? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative strategies? Is the principal investigator well suited to carry out the proposed study? Is the scientific environment adequate? Is there evidence of institutional support? Have appropriate agreements with collaborators been established?

5. Reasonableness of the budget: Is the budget reasonable in relation to the proposed research?

Scoring and selection

Scores will be given for each category, ranging from 1 to 5.

The written reviews of referees are an important element in the decision making process, but these are not the sole criteria for deciding the success or failure of an application. In practice, only projects which score highly are likely to be successful. We expect to provide feedback to both successful and unsuccessful applicants in the form of reviewers' comments plus any relevant points arising from the committee discussions, but this may not always be practical. Applicants may be invited to respond to reviewers' comments before a decision is made by the committee.

Whilst there are many inherent problems with the peer review process, we believe that this process constitutes the fairest and most consistent way to assess grant applications. We shall endeavour to ensure that the process is as open and transparent as possible and that we maintain the best possible communications with all our applicants.