

Call for research proposals on fatigue and pain in RMDs

Introduction

Fatigue and pain are central manifestations of many different forms of Rheumatic Musculoskeletal Diseases (RMDs). Fatigue and Pain, alone or in combination, are associated with substantial impairment of the life quality of patients with RMD and therefore constitute a major clinical challenge. Despite their importance, our knowledge on the nature of fatigue and pain in RMDs, their mechanisms, clinical impact and management, is more than limited to date and new research efforts in this field are required. Furthermore, the relation between inflammatory activity and fatigue as well as pain in RMDs is often not linear suggesting additional factors that control the burden of fatigue and pain in RMDs. The Foundation for Research in Rheumatology FOREUM acknowledges that **fatigue and pain are underappreciated in RMD research to date**, creating a large unmet need for future research in this field. Based on this situation, FOREUM announces a call for basic, translational and clinical studies that help to better understand fatigue and pain in RMDs. With this call FOREUM aims to instigate high-quality research that improves understanding of the pathogenesis, clinical relevance and management of fatigue and pain in RMDs.

Scope

FOREUM seeks to support projects in the following areas:

- Mechanistic studies that allow to better explain the nature of fatigue and/or pain in RMDs
- Studies identifying genetic, molecular, clinical or psychosocial factors associated with fatigue and/or pain in RMDs
- Projects that address the clinical impact of fatigue and/or pain in RMDs as well as their relation to objective (e.g. inflammatory) manifestations of the disease
- New management concepts that improve fatigue and/or pain in patients with RMDs

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 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 Fatigue and Pain 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 26 April 2020 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 1 July 2020 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 (non-scientific language for the general public) 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 25 October to the FOREUM Secretariat.

Participation of patient research partners

Participation of patient research partners is strongly recommended for clinical research projects and should be considered for all other 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 January 2021. Final decisions will be communicated by the FOREUM Secretariat by February 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: | 26 April 2020 |
| Decisions on Lol announced: | 1 July 2020 |
| Closing date for full proposals: | 25 October 2020 |
| Decisions on full proposals announced: | 1 February 2021 |

Inquiries

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