

## Call for research proposals on Remission and Flare

### Introduction

**Remission and Flare:** New potent drugs and novel disease management strategies lead to higher remission rates in patients suffering from various rheumatic and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs) such as rheumatoid arthritis, spondyloarthritis and systemic autoimmune disorders such as systemic sclerosis (SSc) or systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE). However, remission or low-disease activity can often not be sustained, resulting in disease activity flares. Such new bouts of inflammation have an important and complex burden on the patient such as increases in pain and loss of joint function, risks for structural damage and disability, fewer therapeutic options and specific management strategies. Disappointment, struggle to remain hopeful about outcomes of disease, new absenteeism with impact on employment options, have an additional impact on the burden of disease. Hence, flares are much more than just an increase in inflammatory disease activity, and should be considered in a holistic context. Our scientific understanding of flares in the various RMDs remains limited. It is still difficult to predict and manage flares as they necessitate complex therapeutic decisions with sufficient attention towards the holistic psychosocial context. Therefore, research into mechanisms, evaluation, management and prevention of flares are necessary to provide good answers to the patient community and to sustain the health of our patients.

### Scope

In the Remission and Flare call, FOREUM seeks to support projects in the following areas:

- Better characterisation of the concept of flares
- Optimization of flare disease activity measurements
- Molecular and cellular mechanisms underlying flares in one or more specific RMDs
- Predictors associated with loss of response to one or more specific drugs or therapeutic targets
- Methods to support prediction of flares including approaches that innovate the prognostic process
- Management of flares within a specific disease, or across various diseases including
  - Drug strategies
  - Personalized medicine approaches
  - Integration of the patient perspective
- Characterization of the concept of sustained remission and its monitoring

### Eligibility

FOREUM primarily encourages collaboration across Europe and therefore requires multi-centre 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**. Centres 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 Remission and Flare 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](mailto:info@foreum.org)). Necessary application forms can be downloaded at [www.foreum.org](http://www.foreum.org).

### **Letter of intent**

All applicants considering submission of a proposal are invited to send a short 'scientific letter of intent' by 7 November 2021 to FOREUM (email to [info@foreum.org](mailto: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](http://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 centres 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 on these aspects:

- Relevance to the subject matter of the call
- Feasibility
- Novelty and importance for the field of rheumatology
- Design and processes

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. Trained Patient Research Partners will evaluate the lay summary on these aspects:

- Relevance to the call and importance for patients
- Appropriateness of the research design and methods
- Active participation of people with Rheumatic or Musculoskeletal Diseases
- Burden for patients participating in this study

The Secretariat will respond by 14 February 2022 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 10 April 2022 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](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 2022. Final decisions will be communicated by the FOREUM Secretariat by beginning of July 2022.

### **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:	7 November 2021
Decisions on letter of intent announced:	14 February 2022
Closing date for full proposals:	10 April 2022
Decisions on full proposals announced:	4 July 2022

### **Inquiries**

For general inquiries, please contact the FOREUM Secretariat at [info@foreum.org](mailto:info@foreum.org).