



Connect Immune Research Call for Applications

Introduction and rationale

There are more than 80 autoimmune conditions and it is estimated that over four million people in the UK live with an illness because their immune system does not work properly.

Research into immune-mediated inflammatory conditions is often pursued in a disease-specific manner, according to clinical presentation, and focusing on later stages of disease. Emerging evidence suggests there are similarities across immune diseases in risk factors, immunological and mechanistic features. suggesting there are significant opportunities to drive forward our understanding of the root causes of individual diseases by encouraging research that works across, or learns from, other autoimmune conditions.

Over a series of workshops, JDRF, Arthritis Research UK, Wellcome and the MRC brought the research community together to discuss common mechanisms underlying these conditions and to catalyse new collaborations, research ideas and proposals in the area. At the last meeting, held February 2017, the immune condition research community explored and further defined five ‘Grand Challenges’ in this area, as well as identifying gaps and opportunities for future research. The grand challenges discussed at the meeting were: immunological tolerance, environmental impact on genetic predisposition, common mechanisms shared across immune conditions, toolkits, technologies and platforms, and therapeutics: translational perspectives.

Arthritis Research UK, JDRF and the MS Society propose to assist the autoimmunity research community to come together as a consortium to address these grand challenges. Together we will provide pilot funding to enable this community to work together closely and effectively. The funding will enable researchers to identify and develop research questions that can be tackled most effectively by collaborating across different conditions, and set out how these questions may be answered.

Call Overview

Funders	Arthritis Research UK, JDRF and the MS Society
Application deadline	4pm, Thursday 19 April 2018
Budget available	Up to £150,000
Project duration	Up to 18 months

Research Question

The Funders request applications to develop a consortium to address one or more of the following grand challenges, gaps and opportunities for future research, identified by representatives of the UK autoimmunity research community in a workshop held in February 2017:

- Immunological tolerance,
- Environmental impact on genetic predisposition,
- Common mechanisms shared across immune conditions,
- Toolkits, technologies and platforms, and
- Therapeutics: translational perspectives.

Study Design

- The application should be from a team of investigators with expertise in a number of autoimmune conditions and related research and involve investigators from more than one institution. Applications from researchers involved in immune condition research other than arthritis, type 1 diabetes and multiple sclerosis are welcome. However, it will be important to show how the outputs from the award could lead to benefit patients with these conditions.
- The lead investigator must have previous experience of leading multi-disciplinary research.
- Links with industrial partners are encouraged.
- The funders shall not specify exactly how the consortium shall be organised, but anticipate funding may be required for meetings, recruitment of a project manager and development of a website/platform to enable information sharing.
- Patient and public involvement is encouraged at all stages of application and award.

Outputs from the Study

- A report detailing the progress made mid-way through the project.
- A final report submitted to the Funders describing the work the consortium has undertaken and how it has addressed one or more of the grand challenges identified above.
- A presentation of results to be delivered to the Oversight Committee upon completion of the project.

Outcomes from the Study

- It is expected that the consortium will be in a stronger position to apply for longer-term funding from non disease-specific funders such as the MRC, Wellcome, industry, EU and other bodies.
- The development of a consortium offers a framework for new non disease-specific research and increased visibility of autoimmune conditions, encouraging further research collaborations and partnerships.
- Through close working with the Funders, raise public comprehension of autoimmunity itself and so provide the basis for better understanding of all immune conditions.
- This area of research could open up new research avenues for all immune disorders and opportunities for the re-purposing of current therapeutics.

Application and assessment process

Who can apply and what you can apply for

The award will be for up to £150,000, up to 18 months with an expected starting date by autumn 2018. This call is open to teams affiliated to a university, hospital or other recognised research institution in the UK.

The application should be led by established groups with an internationally competitive research track record and experience of leading collaborative research. Applications from researchers involved in immune condition research other than arthritis, type 1 diabetes and multiple sclerosis are welcome.

Though the applications should have a UK focus, collaborations with international and industrial partners are encouraged. For information about industrial collaborations please read the [guidelines](#) from the AMRC.

Before completing the application form please read the associated guidance documentation. Research involving patients, service users, care professionals or volunteers, or their organs, tissue or data must obtain Research Ethics Committee (REC) approval before any work can start. For any pre-clinical studies using animal models, Arthritis Research UK, JDRF and the MS Society are fully committed to the 3Rs principles (Replace, Reduce, Refine) and all our research abides by rules set out by the [Home Office](#). Under this system, animals can only be used when there is no alternative. We are members of the [Association of Medical Research Charities](#) and sign up to their position on animal research.

How will applications be assessed

This is a **single stage** application process.

Applications will undergo expert peer review. Assessment by lay people forms a key part of the review process, as such, applicants should carefully consider the use of non-scientific language in the application form.

Depending on the number of applications, the funders may undertake a triage stage based on reviewer feedback prior to the final panel meeting.

A panel of scientific experts and lay people will recommend an award.

The criteria used to assess applications include:

- Relevance to the development of collaborative strategies leading to the identification of solutions for autoimmune and immune mediated diseases.
- Potential for long term impact on quality of life for people currently living with autoimmune or immune mediated conditions.
- Involvement of people with autoimmune or immune mediated conditions in the proposed research.
- Clear description and justification of how the project methodology will address the proposed study design and deliver the required outcomes.
- Strength and make-up of the research team, including multidisciplinary collaboration and proposed management arrangements.
- Applicants' track record and ability to deliver the proposed research, and facilities to conduct the proposed research
- Feasibility, the potential to deliver the stated outcomes within the timescales and budget
- Value for money

Patient and Public Involvement

We believe that involving people affected by medical conditions strengthens the quality and relevance of medical research. We encourage applicants to consider how the quality, feasibility or practicality of their proposal could be improved by involving people affected by immune conditions in its development or oversight. It is important to write a clear non-scientific summary because people affected by autoimmune conditions are involved in the review process. Please see the Applicant Guidance for further information.

For further information about involvement, please email researchnetwork@mssociety.org.uk. There are also useful resources on INVOLVE's website: www.invo.org.uk.

Contact details and how to submit an application

To submit a proposal on this topic, complete the online application form at Arthritis Research UK [grant management system](#).

Deadline for application	<i>4pm, Thursday 19 April 2018</i>
Notification	<i>July 2018</i>
Project Start	<i>By Autumn 2018</i>

Enquiries

Please contact Arthritis Research UK email: research@arthritisresearchuk.org.

Funder information

- Arthritis Research UK is a registered charity in England and Wales (no 207711) and in Scotland (no SC041156). A company limited by guarantee (England) no 490500. Registered office: Copeman House, St. Mary's Gate, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S41 7TD.
- Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) is a registered charity in England and Wales (no 295716) and in Scotland (no SC040123). A company limited by guarantee (England) no 2071638. Registered office: 17/18 Angel Gate, City Road, London EC1V 2PT.
- The Multiple Sclerosis Society is a registered charity in England and Wales (no 1139257) and in Scotland SC041990). A company limited by guarantee (England) no 07451571. Registered office: MS National Centre, 372 Edgware Road, London, NW2 6ND.