

FIRA-FPS Grant 2022

Call for Applications

Fondazione Italiana per la Ricerca sull'Artrite (FIRA)

FIRA is a non-profit organization that exclusively pursues purposes of social solidarity and of carrying out medical-scientific research in the field of treatment and study of rheumatic diseases. FIRA promotes and encourages scientific research also through the establishment of research centers or through initiatives aimed at deepening and disseminating knowledge of the rheumatological sciences for the purposes of scientific, social and cultural progress.

Fondazione Pisana per la Scienza (FPS)

FPS is a non-profit research institute focused on biomedical research with a rapid clinical translation. At the core of all our activities are issue-oriented and problem-driven research questions that are approached in an interdisciplinary manner with the ambitious goal of achieving tangible improvements for mankind.

FIRA-FPS Grant

The objective of this call is to attract talented researchers called to play the role of scientific coordinator and "bridge scientist" between FIRA, representing the investigators associated to the Italian Society of Rheumatology (SIR), and FPS.

The researcher who wins the call will have to promote and facilitate research initiatives of SIR associates, approved by FIRA, which may need the technologies and expertise of FPS. SIR associates should provide the founding for the proposed research and are due to supervise their own projects, including presence on site when needed. Reagents, experimental fees and lodging should be founded by the proponents. The FIRA-FPS researcher will help on site SIR delegates in exploring potential technological support from FPS to the proposed research projects.

The recipient of this grant will also supervise and be principal investigator (PI) of the study titled "The Womb Microbiota in Rheumatoid Arthritis (WomanRA)" (described below) identified by the FIRA scientific committee as a starting strategic study for the development of an innovative line of research in the field of Rheumatology.

Individual scientists are invited to submit their CV and their strategic vision for the implementation and promotion of the partnership project covered by this call. With these FIRA-FPS grants, researchers will have the opportunity to pursue their scientific vision of the project by having full access to the state-of-the-art technology platforms available at FPS.

Description of FIRA-FPS Grant WomanRA. The uterine-joint axis in Rheumatoid Arthritis female patients: role of microbiota-induced uterine-derived immune cells in the pathogenesis of a gender-specific disease.

In rheumatic and autoimmune diseases, men and women differ markedly in the frequency

and clinical presentation of various diseases. While the gender differences are well established, the origin of these differences and their effects on treatment remain open to debate. Female reproductive mucosal tissues are unique in that they also require adaptation to specialized physiological situations such as menstruation, fertilization, pregnancy and delivery. Reproductive mucosal tissues are also crucial for nourishing and maintaining tolerance to the semi-allogeneic fetus during pregnancy. The cervico-vaginal mucosa maintains homeostasis with the vaginal microbiome, comprising primarily *Lactobacillus*, while at the same time surveying for pathogens. In the human ectocervix, T cells, sometime aggregated in lymphoid structures, NK and B cells, innate lymphoid cells (ILC), Tissue resident memory T cells (Trm) and T follicular helper (Tfh) cells, have been demonstrated in the murine uterus making the uterus one of the most relevant immune organs in female. The aim of this project is to evaluate the presence of uterine dysbiosis in patients with RA and to study how it can modify innate and adaptive uterine immune responses potentially relevant to the pathogenesis of the disease. The demonstration of the existence of a uterus-immune system axis may contribute to the understanding of the gender differences in RA. This study gives the basis for further extension aiming to investigate prospectively how the uterine inflammation and dysbiosis may influence the disease progression and response to treatments.

FIRA-FPS Grant Proponents

Ideal proponents within this Call for Applications are excellent researchers, trailblazers of original talent. We particularly welcome applications from young candidates (under the age of 40) that are in the first stages of their academic career and have already demonstrated exceptional talent in scientific research.

Guidelines for applicants

The selection round will take place in spring 2022, applications can be submitted until April 30th 2022 20:00 CET.

Selection criteria for the applicant to be indicated in the submission form:

- Hold a PhD in Molecular Medicine, Immunology, Rheumatology or a similar subject, together with relevant experience
- Demonstration of acquisition of high level of knowledge and skills necessary for the job posted
- Demonstration of understanding of, and commitment to, an academic career
- Demonstration of the potential for scientific independence and the ability to lead a research team
- Potential to become a leader in the chosen field
- Ability to contribute ideas for new research projects and research income generation
- Excellent communication skills, including the ability to write for publication, present research proposals and results, and represent the research group at meetings
- Experience in genetics, genomics, T cell biology and immunological assays including flow cytometry
- Experience of independently managing funding and a discrete area of a research project
- Experience of actively collaborating in the development of research articles in the field of Rheumatology for publication
- Prizes or distinctions
- Presentation of work at a national or international meeting
- Significant publications in peer reviewer journals

Preparing an application

FIRA-FPS Grant 2022 application forms are available on the FPS website http://www.fpscience.it/FIRA_FPS-G22. To apply, complete the application form, save it as a pdf file and e-mail it to: FIRA-FPSproposal@fpscience.it

Applications must be written in English and include:

- the candidate's Curriculum Vitae and list of publications;

A maximum of three letters of recommendation can be enclosed.

Specific conditions

Start date

The FIRA-FPS Grant 2022 project must commence within three months of the grant being awarded.

Data management

Responsible data management is part of good research. Any research data that emerges from the FIRA-FPS Grant 2022 will become freely and sustainably available, as much as possible, for reuse by other researchers. Accordingly, the applicant should have a plan by which to uphold the FAIR data principles, i.e. that the data remains Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Re-usable.

Ethical aspects

Any ethical issues must be considered in advance. Certain research projects may require a statement of approval from a recognized medical ethics review committee or an animal experiments committee. Applicants are responsible to determine whether their research proposals raise possible ethical issues. If so, they are also responsible to provide any necessary statement of approval from the appropriate ethics review committee and/or license before the project starts. FIRA/FPS reserve the right to seek external advice on these matters. If at any point, after discussing the matter with the applicant, FIRA/FPS feel that an ethics review is required, the applicant must take the necessary measures to obtain it. If the applicant fails to obtain the required statement of approval from an ethics review committee, the grant will be rescinded.

Personnel policy

FPS is an equal opportunities employer and welcomes applications from all sections of the community. We encourage members of minority groups to apply.

Intellectual property

If external groups are involved in the research, specific agreements will be signed in order to define IP details before project activity starts.

Assessment

Eligibility

FIRA will first screen applications to ensure they comply with the formal conditions of the FIRA-FPS Grant 2022 scheme. Only those that comply will proceed to further consideration.

Selection process

For the selection, a dedicated committee of experts will be created (FIRA Grant committee). The FIRA-FPS Grant committee will assess the applications, globally and comparatively,

and rate them in relation to the proponent's CVs.

Interview

The *FIRA-FPS Grant* committee may select a number of candidates for an interview aimed at testing the possession by the candidate of the motivation, competence and strategic vision of the partnership object of the call

Decision

The *FIRA-FPS Grant* committee will formulate the funding recommendation to the FIRA board that will take the final decision.

Arrangements and reporting

The designated PI can allocate part of the awarded grant to finance its salary up to a maximum of € 55,000. The remainder of grant can be used by the PI to purchase reagents/laboratory products necessary for the advancement of the WomanRA project. FIRA will also support the stay expenses of the PI at the FPS outside the grant. An annual progress report of the project is foreseen and FIRA can choose to appoint a project monitor who can assist the PI in the critical analysis of all the components of the project, in order to highlight risks and threats that hinder its conclusion, facilitating any corrective actions. The winner will also be called to report to FIRA annually for any other additional research projects supported by FIRA in the manner above indicated.

Privacy policy

Fondazione Pisana per la Scienza (FPS), pursuant to art. 13th and 14th of the European Regulation 2016/679 (hereinafter "GDPR"), as Data Controller, hereby informs you that the personal data you provide to participate in the present FPS grant call will be processed only for the purposes and with the methods indicated below.

Types of personal data processed

We may process the personal data that are necessary to evaluate your application, contained in the application you sent, in the form and in the curriculum vitae attached to it. In particular, the following personal data will be processed:

- a) personal and contact details (such as, name, surname, date of birth, C.F., address, telephone numbers);
- b) information related to work experience, education and training, special qualifications, publications, professional skills, and all the other information specifically required by the call;
- c) information relating to the existence of impediments;
- d) any special categories of personal data contained in the curriculum vitae, such as belonging to protected categories. The candidate must not indicate special categories of personal data (revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person's sex life) unless strictly necessary for the establishment of any employment relationship or in any case in establishing the contractual relationship with the Data Controller.

Purposes of the processing

The processing of the data provided by the interested parties has the purpose of managing the selection procedure and therefore of allowing the verification of the suitability of the participants in the selection procedure, the verification of the requirements and the data submitted with the application, the correct conduct of the procedure, and if necessary, the correct establishment of the contractual relationship with FPS and exercise the rights of FPS in any disputes.

Legal basis:

- processing is necessary for the performance of a contract to which the data subject is party or in order to take steps at the request of the data subject as necessary to define contract details;

- processing is necessary for compliance with a legal obligation to which the controller is subject (art. 6.1 lett. c) Reg. 679/2016);
- processing is necessary for the purposes of carrying out the obligations and exercising specific rights of the controller or of the data subject in the field of employment and social security and social protection law.

Provision and Data retention period

Failure to provide the requested information may determine the exclusion from the selection procedure. The personal data processed will be stored for the duration of the selection procedure or for any different term provided for by the applicable legislation.

Recipients of personal data

The personal data you provide will be processed by appointed personnel, properly trained and operating under the authority and responsibility of the Data Controller. Personal data may also be processed by third parties that provide instrumental services, including services of, communication, e-mail and letter services, technical services for the management of the website and IT service providers. Only the data strictly necessary for the performance of the related functions will be communicated to the subjects indicated above. The updated list of all recipients is available at the headquarters of the Data Controller and will be provided at the request of the Data subject by writing to the following e-mail address: privacy@fpscience.it

Your personal data or other information that will be generated during the procedure may also be transferred, subject to legal limitations, to the subjects participating in the selection procedure or to others entitled on the basis of the regulations on the right of access.

Rights of the Data Subject

We also inform you that, in relation to the data itself, you can exercise the rights established by the CHAPTER III of the Regulation at any time. In particular, you have the right to obtain the access to your personal data, to rectify or to erase them, to integrate the incomplete data, to restrict the processing; to receive the data in a commonly used and machine-readable format; to withdraw the given consent; to object all or in part the use of the data, as well as to exercise the other rights provided by the applicable discipline. These rights can be exercised by writing to the Data Controller's address or by e-mail to the following e-mail address: privacy@fpscience.it

Pursuant to art. 77 of the Regulation, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the Supervisory Authority if you consider that the data processing infringes the Regulation.

Data Controller is Fondazione Pisana per la Scienza Onlus with legal head office in Via Ferruccio Giovannini 13 - 56017 San Giuliano Terme (PI).

You can contact the Data Protection Officer of Fondazione Pisana per la Scienza Onlus by writing to the following e-mail address: privacy@fpscience.it