REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)  
POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP  

ISSUED BY THE SPINAL CORD INJURY RESEARCH FUND  
ADMINISTERED BY THE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA (MUSC)  

RFP 2015 – PD  

Date of Release: December 1, 2015  
Deadlines for Submission: Open  

Background: Amendment (Bill S54 44-38-510) to Section 2, Chapter 38, Title 44 of the 1976 SC Code was ratified on July 20, 2000 and authorized the new South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund (SCIRF) provided from a $100 surcharge on each Driving Under the Influence (DUI) conviction. The SCIRF is administered by the SCIRF Board appointed by the Governor and is attached to MUSC for staff and administrative purposes. The law authorizes the SCIRF to utilize monies to cover basic operating and administrative costs but directed that the balance be provided for spinal cord injury (SCI) research projects.

SCI is a serious cause of disability, results in an increased lifelong risk of secondary health conditions, and is typically associated with elevated risk of mortality. Often traumatic in origin, it may also result from inflammatory, neoplastic, developmental, or rarely infectious causes. The consequences of SCI are legion, including paralysis of legs and arms, even muscles of respiration; loss of sensation and autonomic control; chronic pain; impairment of bowel, bladder, and sexual function; metabolic disorders, such as hypercalcemia; muscle spasticity with contractures of joints, fractures, and heterotopic ossification; complications such as decubitus ulcers, uncontrolled blood pressure, and frequent infections. People with SCI may face extraordinary demands due to the costs of medical care, limitations in rehabilitation resources after profound loss of mobility, and the absence of environmental supports. The families of people with SCI also face additional demands, and the costs of care to families and the residents of South Carolina are extraordinary and ongoing. The long-term goal of this research initiative is to minimize the risk and incidence of SCI, interrupt or reverse the process of SCI, and improve the health and quality of life for residents of South Carolina with SCI.

Areas of potential research interest include: basic neurobiology, including regeneration of cells and axons, modulation of inflammatory and destructive processes, prevention of injury-induced neurotoxicity or secondary injury; pre-clinical studies, including refinement of animal models of SCI; translation of pre-clinical findings into treatment, including pharmacological trials, surgical approaches, and previously unexplored treatments; clinical issues, including diagnostic assessment and monitoring, relationship to other spinal cord disorders and psychological disorders; outcomes of rehabilitation, including therapies (prosthetic, physical, occupational, speech/language, recreational), secondary health conditions, quality of life (technological solutions, functional improvement), and attendant care; epidemiology, including factors affecting incidence, availability, and quality of SCI care in South Carolina; education and prevention, including education curriculum for people and families in appropriate and adequate SCI care (classroom, career), community (prevention of alcohol-related injury, opportunities for therapy and rehabilitation), and health care providers (curriculum at South Carolina colleges and universities, professional education).

Request for Proposals: The SCIRF invites applications for Postdoctoral Research Fellowships to work with established programs of research on all aspects of SCI. The goal of this mechanism is to increase the number of individuals with doctorates who seek postdoctoral training in SCI, working with a mentor who has an independent program of research in SCI.
Funding Mechanism: *Postdoctoral Research Fellowships*

*Postdoctoral research fellowships* will not exceed $50,000 over a 12 month period. The primary goal of this grant will be to support the postdoctoral training of the research fellow for 12 months so that the individual may work in the laboratory of an established SCI investigator who will provide mentorship and the basic resources to complete the training. The postdoctoral fellow and mentor research may be basic science, applied, or translational. We are particularly interested in funding projects specifically addressing issues faced by people with SCI in South Carolina.

**Eligibility and Terms of Support:** Applications for *postdoctoral research fellowships* will be accepted from investigators who have established programs of SCI research that are currently supported by state or federal funding. This includes, but is not limited to, faculty members of research and educational institutions throughout the state. The applicant must have the time to provide the mentorship and the resources for the postdoctoral candidate to complete their research training. A small portion of the $50,000 grant may be used to purchase supplies related to the research, travel for the postdoctoral candidate to attend the scientific conference, or other reasonable minor expenses. All research activities must be approved by the appropriate institutional review board.

It is preferred that the grantee have an individual named and submitted as part of the grant application, attaching the appropriate curriculum vita of both the mentor and the postdoctoral candidate. However, mentors may request funding to seek a postdoctoral candidate and therefore may submit the grant application with the postdoctoral candidate “to be named”. This may facilitate the process of identifying an appropriate postdoctoral candidate. Under this circumstance, the mentor must submit the name of the postdoctoral candidate who is eventually identified, along with their curriculum vita so that the scientific directors may review and approve the candidate. This will ensure the appropriateness of the candidate and the availability of all necessary resources to maximize the benefits of the postdoctoral experience.

Continued funding for a second year is possible, but will require a new application which must, in part, demonstrate the successful completion of the first year activities.

**Reporting/Presentations:** A Technical Progress Report is due at 6 months. A Final Report is due within 60 days after termination of the grant. All reports should be submitted to the Executive Director. Progress will be evaluated by the Scientific Directors. In addition, all applicants will be required to present their research/findings at a SCIRF meeting and/or Scientific Conference once per grant year.

**Funding:** *Postdoctoral research fellowships* will not exceed $50,000 over a 12 month period. The SCIRF does not provide support for indirect costs, and any such related costs essential to the proposed research should be included in the direct cost budget request.

**Timeframes:** The review of all *postdoctoral research fellowship* grant proposals will be completed within 90 days following the receipt of the application. The SCIRF will make money available within 30 days following approval from the Board of Directors, and receipt of signed acceptance forms from successful applicants.

**Review Process:** Grant proposals for *postdoctoral research fellowships* will be reviewed by the scientific directors of the SCIRF. One external reviewer may be utilized if it is deemed helpful by either the SCIRF Scientific Directors or the Board of Directors. Investigators are encouraged to submit the names of two (2) reviewers qualified to review their proposals. These individuals may be selected as ad hoc reviewers. The SCIRF Board of Directors will consider reviews in making final award decisions.
Submission Address: Grant applications should be submitted in PDF form by e-mail to the SCIRF Executive Director.

Application Format: The proposal must not exceed five pages, not including the Face Page, Abstract or any vita/biosketch. The application format is as follows:

I. Face page
II. Abstract
III. Project Proposal according to current NIH format which includes:
   A. Specific Aims and Hypothesis
   B. Background and Approach
   C. Innovation
   D. Preliminary data (if any)
   E. Experimental design and expected results of outcome
IV. Value to the State of South Carolina (benefit to the people of the State and/or plans for obtaining extramural funding and/or compatibility with the SCIRF’s primary objectives and initial priorities.)
V. References
VI. Detailed Budget (with narrative justification)
VII. Biosketch (of all critical participants) – abridged NIH format

Review Criteria: Postdoctoral Research Fellowship applications will be reviewed according to the following criteria:

1. Significance
2. Innovation
3. Investigator(s)
4. Approach
5. Environment - availability of adequate facilities to conduct the proposed project and to support the career of the research candidate
6. Appropriateness of the budget

Scoring Procedures: 1-9 scale according to current NIH standards. Scores ranging from 1-3 are considered as High Impact, 4-6 as Moderate Impact and 7-9 as Low Impact.

1. Exceptional; exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
2. Outstanding; Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
3. Excellent; Very strong with only minor weaknesses
4. Very good; Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
5. Good; Strong with at least with one moderate weakness
6. Satisfactory; Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
7. Fair; Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
8. Marginal; A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
9. Poor; Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses
**Number of Awards:** The SCIRF anticipates making up to 4 *Postdoctoral Research Fellowship* grant awards per year.

**Awarding of Funds:** Projects will be awarded by grant or contract based upon applicable South Carolina policies, procedures, and laws concerning the expenditure of State funds. Grants or contracts are made to the principal investigator’s institution, not to any individual or principal investigator.

**For Questions or Additional Information:** Potential applicants should contact Ms. Catherine Leigh Graham, Executive Director, South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund. Questions regarding applied or clinical research should be addressed to Dr. James Krause, Scientific Director, South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund. Basic science questions should be addressed to Dr. Naren Banik, Associate Scientific Director, South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund.

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Title of Project:

Name of Principal Investigator:

Institution:

Address:

Phone:

Fax:

Email:

Is this a resubmission:

   _____ Yes
   _____ No

Total Amount Requested:

Name of Contact Person:

Phone of Contact Person:

Signatures

Principals Investigator:  ______________________________________________________

Authorized Institutional Official:  ____________________________________________