BCPM Project Call on Covid-19 and SARS-CoV-2

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Deadlines

Release date: Friday, April 24th, 2020
Application due: Monday, May 18th, 2020, 12.00h CET
Decision announcement: Wednesday, July 1st, 2020
Start of projects: July 2020

Submission instructions

Project proposals are to be submitted using the official template (see the Call for Projects section on www.bcpm.unibe.ch. Applications should be submitted as a single PDF document to info@bcpm.unibe.ch. The subject line of the e-mail should read “BCPM Project Application”. Receipt will be confirmed by e-mail.

Incomplete or non compliant applications, or those received after the deadline will not be considered. Please direct questions to Timo Staub (timo.staub@bcpm.ch, +41 31 632 83 25).

Purpose

Proposed projects are expected to advance the knowledge on Covid-19 and SARS-CoV-2, its pathogenesis, and its impact on the infected persons and the health system as a whole. The aim is to contribute to the establishment of new treatment options, efficient patient management, and/or public health preparedness and response to the foreseeable second wave of the outbreak. The scope of this open call remains broad - projects can be of basic or applied research which may focus on topics such as e.g.:

- Clinical issues (patient management, new options for symptomatic treatment, etc.)
- Diagnostics (testing, stratification of patients with respect to individual comorbidities, etc.)
- Epidemiology (lock down measures, socio-economic issues, etc.)
- Basic research (viral entry pathways, etc.)
- Development of e.g. statistical tools or apps in the context of COVID-19, digitalization solutions that generate structured data for further data science research

The project should have an impact with regards to Covid-19 research. This might be done by addressing applied research issues (e.g., about the effectiveness of lockdown measures, or the use of apps), by participating in clinical trials, or by addressing symptomatic treatment such as the use of steroids and anticoagulants.

The project should be linked to precision medicine, for example by addressing the stratification of patients, or by addressing the virus entry pathways with respect to the individual genomes and proteomes.

Where relevant, proposals should consider collaborating with the core facilities/platforms of the University of Bern and Inselspital, such as Next Generation Sequencing, Cytomics, or the Biobank. E.g., the Liquid Biobank Bern (LBB) has been systematically collecting and storing material (plasma, serum, urine and DNA) derived from routine samples of stationary Covid-patients since
March 23rd. The samples and the linked clinical date can be requested from the LBB. The LBB infrastructure and staff can also help with the organization of new sample collection, in particular samples from patients treated in the intensive care unit. Projects might use the already collected samples, or contribute new samples.

**Budget**

The total budget for this call is CHF 300'000. Applicants may request between CHF 30'000 and CHF 100'000; smaller projects are encouraged. This grant does not support indirect costs such as overheads. Funding will be contingent on obtaining the appropriate protocols (e.g. ethical approval, Covid19 research activity approval by University of Bern and/or the Inselspital).

**Applicant Eligibility**

This RFA is open to all investigators with a primary appointment at the University of Bern and/or the Inselspital.

Primary Investigators who already have a research project funded by the BCPM are not eligible for this call.

**Proposal Eligibility**

- Proposals must address the research topic described above, and must be compliant with the specifications mentioned in the template.
- Partnerships between basic scientists and clinical practitioners are encouraged but not required.
- A link to precision medicine is required.
- The interconnection and re-use of current research infrastructure is encouraged but not required.
- The use of biobank samples (see [www.biobankbern.ch](http://www.biobankbern.ch)) is encouraged but not required.

**Selection Criteria**

Applications will first be screened for overall completeness and feasibility. Only eligible applications will be considered. Proposals will then be evaluated by the Scientific Review Board (SRB), headed by Prof. Nadia Mercader. External, impartial experts will also be involved. The projects will be evaluated on the basis of scientific merit, impact with regards to Covid-19 and feasibility.
Expenditure Guidelines

Allowable expenditures:

- Costs for laboratory supplies and expenses such as materials, reagents, cryogenic vials, next generation sequencing (NGS), mass spectrometry, etc.
- Costs for biostatistical analysis.
- User fees for Core Facilities.
- Personnel other than the PI(s) can be funded when highly specific work is required (e.g., in domains such as epidemiology).

Non-allowable expenditures:

- PI salary support
- Secretarial/administrative personnel
- Capital costs/equipment, including maintenance/service contracts
- Office furniture and supplies
- Construction, renovation, or maintenance of buildings/laboratories
- Rental of laboratory or office space
- Personal computers
- Non-medical services to patients
- Publication costs, including reprints
- Purchasing or binding of periodicals and books
- Dues and membership fees in scientific societies
- International travel and conference/meeting expenses

Grant Guidelines

To responsibly manage funds, the following guidelines have been instituted. **Acceptance of an award indicates agreement to abide by these guidelines.** Failure to abide by these guidelines will jeopardize eligibility for future grants and/or BCPM Membership:

1. If a grant is awarded, the PI(s) must agree to provide a final progress report, including an overview about the results which have been reached (publication, clinical outcome, etc.). A presentation might also be required.
2. The BCPM may request the PIs of selected projects to work together, if their projects are considered to be very similar.
3. Publications resulting from the research supported by this grant must contain the acknowledgment “Supported by the Bern Center for Precision Medicine”.
4. Any additional publications or additional grants resulting from the grant must be reported.
5. The funds awarded shall be used solely for the purposes specified in the grant, in strict compliance with the application submitted and as executed by the recipient.
6. Grant recipients must respond to requests for information from the scientific leadership and administrative staff about their project.

7. Recipients might be asked to participate in a progress update meeting or conference to describe their research.

8. Applicants are encouraged to hand in projects which have also been sent to other funding bodies such as SNF. However, if a project were to be funded twice, then the BCPM has the right to adjust its decision accordingly (reduce its funding and/or cancel double funding).