

PhD4MD: Collaborative Research Training Programme for Medical Doctors

CALL TEXT 2017

BACKGROUND

The health system requires an increasing number of physician-scientists with a deep understanding of research and medicine to ensure that discoveries in fundamental research can reach clinical practice.

During their undergraduate and specialization studies, medical doctors receive some basic training in research. The objective of the PhD4MD Programme is to provide them with advanced hands-on training on the latest fields of research and cutting-edge technologies.

Medical professionals who enroll in the PhD4MD programme will carry out a project in translational research jointly coordinated by a basic and a clinical research investigator, belonging to one of the four participating institutions: the CRG (the Centre for Genomic Regulation together with the National Centre for Genomic Analysis, CNAG), the IRB Barcelona (Institute for Research in Biomedicine), the IDIBAPS (August Pi i Sunyer Institute for Biomedical Research) and the VHIR (Vall d'Hebron Research Institute). Ultimately, the medical professionals enrolled in the program will obtain their PhD title from one of the associated Universities.

This action aims to:

- Provide training of scientific excellence for physicians who have completed their FSE (Specialized Health Training), in order to increase the critical mass of physician-scientists and to build a bridge between research and medicine. During their doctoral thesis the enrolled physicians will acquire the tools and knowledge that will allow them to develop their future work at the interface between the clinical practice and the laboratory.
- Encourage patient-oriented and population-oriented investigation through translational research activities.
- Promote collaboration between the CRG-CNAG, the IRB Barcelona, the IDIBAPS and the VHIR, and consequently further excellence and progress in translational research.

1. Purpose

The call seeks to select outstanding and motivated PhD4MD candidates who will carry out collaborative projects to finally obtain a PhD degree. The current call offers 5 PhD contracts of 3-year duration.

2. Eligibility criteria

Candidates should fulfill the following eligibility criteria at the time of the call deadline. If one or more of the eligibility criteria are not fulfilled, the proposal will be declared ineligible and will be withdrawn from any further consideration:

- Candidates must have obtained a Medical Degree and the Spanish FSE (MIR - Medical Internship or residency) or an officially accredited as equivalent obtained in any EU country between 01/01/2013 and the contract starting date, which should be before 31/10/2017.
Only MDs (MIR) are eligible. FIR, BIR candidates will not be considered.
For calculating the aforementioned term, the following periods will be excluded:
 - a) Maternity or paternity leave, according to the Social Security General Regime regulations. An extension of 1 year for each daughter/son will be applied.
 - b) Illness or serious accident leading to medical leave: if such leave lasted more than 3 months.
 - c) Care of dependents according to Law 39/2006, if such a care period lasted more than 3 months
- Candidates who have already been granted a similar PhD contract (such as “Río Hortega” Contracts) are not eligible.
- Candidates should have previous research experience and a strong commitment to scientific research.
- Candidates must have a solid knowledge of English.

In case of any doubt concerning the eligibility criteria and prior to the submission of the application, applicants should contact ajuts@vhir.org.

3. How to apply

Applications for the PhD4MD Programme will be accepted exclusively through the online application system available on the PhD4MD website. The deadline for applications is March 31th, 2017.

Proposals must be written in English. The candidates will be asked to complete the following information on the application form: General information, Reference letters, Education, coursework, honors, scholarships, prizes and awards, research experience, breaks and scientific interests.

The selection process may be declared null and void if the Selection Committee states that the candidates do not meet the minimum eligibility requirements.

4. Selection process

After the deadline, submitted proposals will be checked for eligibility. Those that do not meet the selection criteria will not undergo further evaluation and will be rejected. All eligible applications will be reviewed by a Scientific Committee formed by 8-10 reviewers (from the participating institutions (CRG-CNAG, IRB Barcelona, IDIBAPS, VHIR), with prior experience in the evaluation of biomedical research projects. The composition of the Committee will respect, whenever possible, gender equality.

Candidates will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria and standards:

- Adequacy of the candidate for the PhD4MD Program, research experience, motivation, and scientific interest.
- Academic record (projects, publications, conferences and others).

The evaluation will be organized in three steps:

1. Pre-selection: The pre-selection will be based on the candidate's CV, reference letters and on the research interests. Complete applications will be reviewed within a few weeks after the deadline.

2. Oral interviews: During the third week of May (15-19 May 2017), the pre-selected candidates will participate in panel interview process. The 5 top candidates in the final ranking list will be offered a PhD4MD contract.

3. Notification of results to candidates: Offers will be made to the successful candidates shortly after the interview period, and no later than May 31th, 2017. Selected students will have two weeks to accept the position and should start their fellowships no later than October 31st, 2017.

5. Appointment conditions

- One of the four partner institutions (CRG-CNAG, IRB Barcelona, IDIBAPS and VHIR) will contract the candidate, following the procedures and internal rules of each institution, as well as employment legislation.
- Each candidate will sign a 3-year full-time contract (fixed-term or pre-doctoral contract) with the host institution.
- Each institution will finance the cost of contracting the candidate (total amount of 35,732€ per year, including Social Security contributions and severance pay).
- The awardees may take time off from the PhD4MDs Program due to illness, pregnancy-related illness, and maternity/paternity leave, in line with statutory provisions.
- Students will have to enroll in a university of their choice, normally the University of Barcelona, the Autonomous University of Barcelona, the Polytechnic University of Catalonia, or the University Pompeu Fabra. The university is the degree-granting body.
- The awardees will receive additional funding to cover expenses related to PhD registration fees and related university taxes ("enrolment fees"). Candidates will be requested to return these amounts if they not deposit their PhD thesis within 6 months of the completion date of the 3-year contract.

- This is a full time position only compatible with guard duty: subject to the agreement of the awardee with his/her main supervisor, the PhD4MD contract will only be compatible with guard duty (for a maximum of 72 hours per month).
- Support by this Programme will be duly acknowledged in any scientific or communication authored by the PhD students.
- PhD Students must comply with the requirements of the two institutions they will belong.
- PhD Students must perform annual Thesis Advisory Committee evaluations

6. Training Program

The Scientific Committee will follow-up the scientific activities of each awardee. Thus, the Committee will establish the necessary procedures and may appoint commissions or experts that it deems necessary to revise the correct use of funds and fulfillment of the contract.

Awardees will submit an annual report to the Scientific Committee detailing the scientific progress, productivity and any other activities related to the PhD thesis carried out during the year. The continuity of the awardee will depend on the Committee's assessment of his/her annual report.

The awardee must deposit the complete doctoral thesis within 6 months of completing the 3-year PhD4MDs contract.

7. Legal regime

All awardees will be subjected to the legal regime according to the law in force at the time of concluding the contract.

In accordance with Organic Law 15/1999, 13 December, governing personal data protection, any personal data provided by applicants will be incorporated into the VHIR's Human Resources file. The purpose of keeping such data is to manage our relationship with applicants. Applicants may exercise the rights to access, change or delete said information by contacting the following e-mail address: institutrecerca@vhir.org.

8. Dissemination

Any information regarding these grants will be placed on the announcement board on the PhD4MD web site.