

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR "POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS" RESEARCH GRANTS FONDAZIONE VERONESI YEAR 2024

Sequencing of the human genome marked the beginning of a new era in biomedicine that is rapidly transforming our understanding of human diseases and, consequently, our ability to prevent and treat them. The availability of tools for quantitative analysis might translate the evaluation of disease risk from the population to the individual, and the choice of treatment from the disease to the patient (***precision medicine***). The impact of precision medicine is more evident in the field of oncology, where tailored therapies have radically modified the natural history of specific tumor types.

In addition important novelties have emerged in the field of immune-related mechanism of initiation and progression of cancer with important therapeutic implications. The events connected to the global health crisis caused by the COVID-19 have underlined the urge to develop research whose findings could be rapidly translated from basic knowledge to strategies for disease prevention, diagnosis and cure: the so-called ***translational medicine***.

Fondazione Umberto Veronesi (FUV) will award **105 fellowships** to young top-level scientists in the field of precision and translational medicine in the field of oncology.

For 2024, FUV offers 70 one-year fellowships and 35 two-years fellowships to promote original research in leading Italian research institutions. ***Each fellowship provides a gross sum of € 33,000 (before tax) per year.***

Up to 5 grants (4 annual and 1 two-year) will be reserved for medical doctors developing clinical research projects.

1. RESEARCH AREAS

FUV aims at accelerating the transition toward precision medicine and supports the highest quality research projects with a high translational potential designed to identify novel approaches for the **prevention, early detection, diagnosis, and treatment** of human diseases that favor long survival.

FUV has two research areas of interest: **Oncology** and **Life Styles for chronic disease prevention**.

1.1 ONCOLOGY

Fighting cancer is the major interest of FUV. The Foundation aims at sustaining cutting-edge research projects with special attention to the following broad research fields:

- i) Clinical oncology and trials;
- ii) Development of novel therapeutics to overcome drug resistance and improve patient prognosis
- iii) Digital platforms for the analyses and interpretation of omics

Primary FUV interests are:

- **Cellular therapies** as a mean to treat cancer (i.e.: CAR-T, CAR-NK);
- **Female tumors** (breast, uterus and ovarian cancers);
- **Male tumors** (prostate, testicle, bladder);
- **Paediatric and adolescents' tumors;**
- **Metastatic diseases;**
- **High impact, still difficult to treat tumors** including lung, pancreatic, gastric, and brain tumors.

However, applications on other cancer types will be evaluated and granted based on excellence.

FUV is also interested in supporting projects in the area of **cardiological and neurological side effects of chemotherapy and radiotherapy.**

1.2 LIFE STYLE FOR CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION

FUV solicits proposals that investigate genetic and cellular mechanisms underlying the **effects of lifestyles on health** and aim at designing novel approaches to **chronic disease prevention, in areas** such as:

- **Smoking and smoking-related pathologies;**
- **Diet and nutrition;**
- **Physical activity;**
- **Impact of pollution.**

2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Experimental research. Italian and foreign researchers holding a scientific degree in Medicine, Biological and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Biotechnology, Biostatistics, Computation Biology, Physics, Mathematics, Engineering, Chemistry, Natural Sciences, Psychology, or any related field. **Post-graduate qualification** (i.e., specialization or PhD) in

health-related fields is required. Selected candidates must carry out their research project in leading Italian institutions.

Clinical research. Italian and foreign medical doctors. Candidates must hold a degree in Medicine and have clinical research experience and **post-graduate qualification** (i.e., specialization or PhD). Selected candidates must carry out their work in leading Italian Research-Hospitals and shall – based on their expertise – become members of specialized clinical teams, led by top-level referents. Please make sure that all qualifications held by foreign candidates are equivalent to their Italian counterparts, in order for them to be able to see patients in Italy. Candidates who do not fulfil the legal requirements to work as clinicians in Italy will be excluded from the evaluation procedure. Please be explicit in the Letter of Acceptance by the Hosting Institute that the candidate meets the legal criteria to work as a clinician.

The fellowships will only be awarded to researchers (Italian or foreigners) for research work at Italian institutions. There are **no fellowships available** for research **outside of Italy**.

For ALL the fellowships:

- All candidates must have **officially** obtained a PhD or specialization degree **no later than 31st December 2023**.
- All candidates (except women with children, see below) must be **under the age of 43 on the 1st of January 2024**.
- Women with children are allowed to count one extra year per child. If awarded, the candidate will be asked to provide a “family certificate”.
- All proposals must be associated to a **PI belonging to the same institution where the candidate will develop his/her research project**.
- **Only ONE application for each PI will be accepted**. The same PI cannot propose more than one candidate. No limitations are set for applications from the same institution.

For experimental research fellowships ONLY:

Candidates must have **at least one original paper as first/co-first/last/co-corresponding author and at least one other article (original or review)** in peer-reviewed international journals. “In press” articles are eligible publications but a DOI number if available and a proof of manuscript acceptance is mandatory, and must be separately sent at borse@fondazioneveronesi.it **no later than 14th September 2023 at 17.59 CET (official grant applications closing date)**. Submitted/under revision manuscripts, book chapters, and conference abstracts and proceedings are **not considered eligible** publications.

3. EVALUATION PROCEDURES

All applications sent by the deadline and meeting the eligibility criteria will be evaluated by a **Scientific Committee** that will establish a ranking list.

3.1 ALLOCATION OF THE ONE-YEAR AND TWO-YEARS FELLOWSHIPS

One proposal can be presented for (i) the **one-year fellowship**, (ii) the **two-year fellowship**, or (iii) **simultaneously for both**. Applicants to the annual or biennial fellowships will submit a proposal detailing research activities to be completed within a one-year or two-year period, respectively.

Applicants to both the annual and biennial fellowships will submit a proposal with a **modular research plan**, clearly detailing activities planned for the first and second year and the respective expected results.

One-year and two-years fellowships will be distributed according to the Research areas (see points 1.1 and 1.2).

There will be a single final ranking list and will include both one-year and two-year applications. According to the ranking list the two-years fellowships will be granted up to the exhaustion of the available 35 fellowships.

After that number only one-year fellowships will be granted. Please note that applications for two-years only (without the possibility of accepting a one-year fellowship) are NOT eligible for a one-year fellowship.

3.2 APPLICANTS IN EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH

Candidates will be awarded funding based on:

1. **Quality of the applicant's scientific CV.**

Please note that academic and professional achievements, studying/working experience abroad, quality of publications (i.e., the impact factor – IF – of the journals), authorship position (first, second, last author etc.) will be part of the selection criteria.

Lay dissemination activities in schools and/or to civil society will be taken into account in the evaluation of the CV. Candidates are strongly invited to indicate title, place and date, sponsor of each single event. If awarded, the candidate must provide proof of his/her participation to the event. Please note that you are required to indicate only "lay

dissemination activities” that you have **already carried on in the past** and **NOT the ones that you plan to perform in the future** and relative to the submitted project.

2. Quality of the proposed research project.

Compliance with the call and field of application, **feasibility, innovation,** and **translational** basis of the project, as well as the potential of the outlined research to make a substantial contribution to the field, will be evaluated.

3. Quality of the Hosting laboratory and Institution.

Quality of the Host Institution (in terms of laboratories, facilities, *etc.*) as well as the competence of the Principal Investigator (PI – either being the head of the hosting laboratory and/or the senior scientist supervising the overall research project including candidate proposed activities), such as expertise in the field of the project, mentoring, international standing, *etc.*, will be evaluated.

3.3 APPLICANTS IN CLINICAL RESEARCH

Candidates will be awarded funding based on:

1. Quality of the applicant’s CV.

Please note that academic and professional achievements, studying/working experience abroad and publications in peer-reviewed journals will be a part of the selection criteria.

Dissemination activities in schools and/or to civil society will be taken into account in the evaluation of the CV. Candidates are strongly invited to indicate title, place and date, sponsor of each single event. If awarded, the candidate must provide proof of his/her participation to the event. Please note that you are required to indicate only “lay dissemination activities” that you have **already carried on in the past** and **NOT the ones that you plan to perform in the future** and relative to the submitted project.

2. Quality of the proposed research project.

Compliance with the call and field of application, **feasibility, innovation,** and **translational** basis of the project, as well as the potential of the outlined research to make a substantial contribution to the field, will be evaluated.

3. Quality of the Hosting Institution.

Institution/Hospital providing comprehensive care together with research activities will be highly valued.

3.4 FOR APPLICANTS IN BOTH EXPERIMENTAL AND CLINICAL RESEARCH

The **seniority and the “academic age”** of the applicant will be considered during the evaluation of CV and publications.

4. GUIDE TO PROPOSAL APPLICATION

To start application submission, please enter your name, surname, email address, fiscal code and your proposed type of research (**experimental or clinical**). You will then be directed to the correct application form.

In the submission form, you will be asked to provide, in separate files, the following documents:

- i) **candidate’s CV** (max 4000 characters including spaces). Candidates who have had a period of justified absence from work (*i.e.* **maternity leave**), may state it in the CV. Date of PhD/Specialization degree must be clearly indicated.
- ii) **list of scientific peer-reviewed publications** (no character limits). It is mandatory to clearly indicate the IF of every single publication mentioned in the application. Please report the last IF available. For journal that have no more IF (*i.e.*: *Oncotarget*) please refer to the last IF available indicating the year. Only original papers and reviews will be evaluated for the publication record. Paper ‘in press’ are eligible only if an Editor ‘letter of acceptance’ is provided to borse@fondazioneveronesi.it **no later than 14th September 2023 at 17.59 CET (official grant applications closing date)**. Papers accepted for publication after the closing of the call and during the process of evaluation will NOT be taken into account. Papers published on new journals with no IF are accepted, on condition that they are published on international and peer-reviewed journals. Posters/abstracts at conferences, meeting proceedings, and book chapters **will not** be considered for evaluation but can be included in the CV.
- iii) a **short abstract** of the proposed project (max 2000 characters including spaces).
- iv) a **description of the proposed research project** – background, experimental plan, description of expected results and future applications to health – (max 9000 characters including spaces).
- v) **Bibliography** is **NOT included** in the 9000 characters of the project description and must be inserted in a separate field of the form with no space limits.
- vi) **PI’s CV** (max 2000 characters including spaces) including the field of investigation, up to five selected publication of the last ten years, and granted founding.

vii) **Research on animals** must conform to regulations protecting animals used for research purposes. Animal protocol(s) must be authorized by the Italian Ministry of Health (D.Lgs.26/2014). Ministry authorization must be valid for the period of the grant. When available a copy of the authorization should be provided during the application process. This is advantageous for the candidate because authorization presence/absence will be taken into account by the evaluating committee in terms of project feasibility.

If not included in the application, animal authorization **MUST** be provided upon grant acceptance or at most one month before the start of the grant. Failure to provide the requested documentations will result in fellowship loss. In case animal studies will be carried out in another lab, provide the authorization released to the collaborator together with a justification/collaboration letter.

viii) **Research on humans** If the research plan includes research in humans, the approval of the local Ethics Committee or Institutional Review Board (IRB) is mandatory. As above, when available a copy of the authorization should be provided during the application process. This is advantageous for the candidate because authorization presence/absence will be taken into account by the evaluating committee in terms of project feasibility. If not included in the application, it **MUST** be provided upon grant acceptance or at most one month before the start of the grant. Failure to provide the requested documentation will result in fellowship loss. In case human samples are from other laboratory provide the authorization released to the collaborator together with a justification/collaboration letter.

Please note that during the application process you will be also asked to upload the following documentation:

- Two letters of recommendation not dated before 1st January 2022 (mandatory). One letter can be written by the hosting PI.
- A letter of acceptance by the hosting institute, signed by the legal representative of the institute (mandatory). This letter must include the declaration that, if the candidate is awarded with a FUV fellowship, he/she will be able to carry out his/her research in that institution; it should also include the name of the laboratory, the name of the PI/Professor/Group leader who will supervise the candidate, the department and the Institution where the research will take place. In the acceptance letter please state clearly that all expenses covered by the **DGL 81/2008 (Attuazione dell'articolo 1 della legge 3 agosto 2007, n. 123, in materia di tutela della salute e della sicurezza nei luoghi di lavoro)** are under the responsibility of the hosting institute (cfr chapter "5. Funding regulations").
- A report on any previous projects undertaken with a grant from FUV (if any) (max three pages).
- Preliminary results of the project (if available) (max two pages).

OTHER INFORMATION

- All application materials must be written in English.
- All files must be in PDF or Word format.
- Each candidate is allowed to enter only one application. Candidates who enter more than one application will be excluded from the evaluation process.
- After submitting your application, it will **NOT** be possible under any circumstances to ask for amendments or corrections.

5. FUNDING REGULATIONS

· The total amount of each 12-month fellowship grant is € 33,000 (before tax). The total amount of each 24-month fellowship grant is € 66,000 (before tax). The fellowship is only meant to pay the researcher's salary and **CANNOT** be used to cover other expenses (lab reagents and supplies, etc.). The fellowship will be paid directly to the awarded candidate on her/his personal bank account.

· Part of the gross salary will be directed to tax coverage (IRPEF, Italian regional and municipal taxes).

Please note that FUV fellowships do NOT provide any payment for retirement contributions, such as INPS, due to the current fiscal law.

· Our Fellowship guarantees an insurance to each researcher, covering permanent disabilities resulting from a workplace-related accident or disease, fatal accidents and a partial reimbursement of medical expenses. Please note that all expenses covered by the **DGL 81/2008 (Attuazione dell'articolo 1 della legge 3 agosto 2007, n. 123, in materia di tutela della salute e della sicurezza nei luoghi di lavoro)** are under the responsibility of the hosting institute. Please **state clearly** in the acceptance letter that **the hosting institute agrees to this clause**.

· In case of **maternity leave** (provided the leave started at least 1 month after the beginning of the fellowship), FUV will **freeze the fellowship** and will then restore the payments once the researcher will be back in the lab, extending the period of fellowship in order to deliver all the payments. To help cover the period of maternity and abstention to work, upon presentation of a certificate of pregnancy and in absence of other forms of social security, FUV will provide a total of **€ 5,000 (gross amount) for a 5-months leave**. Abstention from work exceeding the 5 months will not be covered by FUV.

- The fellowship can be terminated at any time by giving advanced notice (at least 15 days before interruption) to FUV by email at: borse@fondazioneveronesi.it. Each fellowship is **strictly personal**: since it is assigned by evaluating both the applicant's cv and project proposal, in case of withdrawal **the fellowship CANNOT be transferred to a colleague**, even if working on the same project, and will be instead transferred to the next best-ranked candidate.
- The fellowship **CANNOT** be combined with any other form of bursary; similarly, the fellowship is not compatible with either temporary or permanent employment by any other Institution; the fellowship is compatible with forms of funding other than the above, provided that they do not exceed a total of € 10,000 (before tax) per year.

6. REPORTING

Awardees of FUV fellowships will be required to produce reports on their research activity, describing their progress and results obtained. For one-year fellowships one **mid-term report** after 6 months, a **short update** on September 2024 and one **final report** at the end of the 12 months are required for both experimental and clinical fellowships. For two-years fellowships, other two reports (**at 18 months and a final one at 24 month**) will be asked.

The **6, 12, 18 and 24 months reports** are required within the first 15 days of the sixth, twelfth, eighteenth and twentyfourth month of the fellowship, respectively. In the month of **September 2024** all FUV fellows will be asked to produce a short, non-technical update of the project to be presented to private sponsors, regardless of the starting date of the fellowship. This report is mandatory and does not substitute the 6 months or the 12 months report.

All reports must be uploaded online through a personalized link that will be sent by email a few weeks before the deadline. Reports sent via mail will not be accepted. Please note that if FUV does not receive the reports by their deadlines, **payment will be immediately suspended** until each report is submitted.

7. DURATION

Grants awarded by FUV will have a duration of 12 or 24 months and will **start on 1st January 2024**: the starting date can be postponed until **no later than 1st April 2024**. It will not be possible, under any circumstances, to further postpone the starting date.

Fellowships are NOT automatically renewed after the natural expiration (12 or 24 months). Candidates who have previously been granted FUV fellowships are encouraged to apply again. However, they are required to follow the standard application procedure and upload a short description of the projects already funded by FUV, indicating key findings and results.

8. AWARD OBLIGATIONS

It is mandatory for all successful applicants **to acknowledge FUV in any publications**, including those related to the granted proposal and those generated from any other research activities carried out during the period supported by FUV. Furthermore, a **pdf version of all published manuscripts** acknowledging FUV must be sent to the address borse@fondazioneveronesi.it as soon as possible and **no later than 2 weeks** after upload on Pubmed. Please note that every year FUV awards a personal donation of **€ 5,000 (gross amount)** to the FUV fellows that authored the **three best publications** during the past year, provided that FUV is clearly acknowledged in the paper and that the fellow is first or last author.

Once a candidate has been granted a FUV fellowship, by accepting it he/she agrees to cooperate with FUV in its dissemination activities and promotion of its scientific research, whenever required. The candidate must therefore be **available to be interviewed** for articles in printed and online journals and **participate in promotional events** (such as a press conferences, meetings in schools, and one or two events with the general public) or other scientific dissemination activities organized by FUV.

Researchers will be asked **to organize at least one meeting** in one school in their city/region during the year of the fellowship, with the goal of promoting engagement between young students and the scientific world. Foreign fellows will be asked to meet students of bilingual schools. More information will follow for the successful applicants.

9. DEADLINE

All applications must be sent no later than 14th September 2023 at 17.59 (Central European Time, CET). After completing the online form, you will receive a confirmation email at the email address supplied. The list of awarded candidates will be published on our website www.fondazioneveronesi.it on the **15th December 2023**. We strongly recommend to **AVOID sending your final application at the last minute**, because this could cause overloading of the system and some applications could be lost without being registered within the deadline. The deadline is strict and we will not, under any circumstances, accept applications sent afterwards.



For any further information, feel free to contact Fondazione Umberto Veronesi at the following e-mail address: borse@fondazioneveronesi.it.

Please DO NOT call by telephone for information on applications, funding and administrative matters.